ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 14 December 2021
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Cannon, Cox, Forecast, Harper, Hinder, Naghi, Newton, Round (Chairman) and S Webb (Vice-Chairman)

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

Issued on Monday 6 December 2021

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

MAIDSTONE Borough Council

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting in person or by remote means, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 10 December 2021). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 10 December 2021). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these Minutes to **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to **the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: **2 December 2021**

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: **Councillors Cannon, Cox, Forecast, Harper, Hinder, Naghi, Newton, Round (Chairman) and S Webb**

Also Present: **Councillor M Rose**

70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

71. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

72. URGENT ITEMS

Whilst not an urgent item, the Chair explained that Item 16 – Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy would be taken after Item 14 – Local Produce and Craft Market Presentation.

73. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor M Rose was present as a Visiting Member for Item 12 – Committee Work Programme and Item 14 – Local Produce and Crafts Market Presentation.

74. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

75. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

76. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

77. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

78. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

79. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

80. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

81. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Town Centre Strategy Update had not yet been reviewed by the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee, so it was possible that following consideration by that Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee, the report would be presented at this Committee again in December.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development confirmed that a presentation would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee to give an overview of the education and arts programme at Maidstone Museum.

An Outside Bodies report on Maidstone Area Arts Partnership would also be added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

82. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

83. LOCAL PRODUCE AND CRAFT MARKET - PRESENTATION

The Market Manager gave a presentation to the Committee on the status of Maidstone Markets, and challenges faced within market events. Nationally, footfall at markets had decreased by 25% on average, and there had been a reduction of 10,000 traders at markets and market events. The increase of internet sales as a proportion of total retail sales had an impact on market trading, and the UK had experienced higher percentages of online sales than the European average, which had been the case since 2014. Recent highlights were outlined, including the Elmer Farewell Weekend which saw 3600 visitors over the two days, and the number of stalls at the local produce and craft markets had doubled between June and November 2021.

In response to questions, the Market Manager confirmed that no official monitoring had been undertaken since the opening of the new food hall at Lockmeadow, with regards to footfall or spend at the market. However, the Committee would be updated with any evidence of changes to the attendance at the market.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's thanks be extended to the Market Manager for the informative presentation.

84. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Item 16 – Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy would be taken before Item 15 – Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure Update.

85. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

The Interim Director for the Local Plan Review introduced the report and outlined the impact of changes in demand on the town centre and other town centres around the country. The development of the Town Centre Strategy was an opportunity to address these pressures and challenges and also to make the town centre more environmentally attractive and to ensure the town centre space is used effectively.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development added that there had been significant changes in town centre patterns nationally. It was critical to have strong leadership and stakeholder engagement, as well as a transformative approach to the identity of the town centre.

The Committee felt that the River Medway should play an important role in the identity of the town and provided a sense of place, as well as the wealth of heritage within the town centre. It was proposed that a focus group of Members was formed to explore transformation ideas and the identity of the town centre.

It was felt that sustainability and transportation links were key considerations as well as usable open space for residents. Cross-party agreement was vital as the strategy would take a considerable time to implement, and so would need full support by all groups.

The Interim Director for the Local Plan Review added that creating a journey through the town centre would increase dwell time which would positively impact on local businesses, and agreed the importance of creating a sense of place for town centre residents, wider borough residents and visitors to Maidstone.

RESOLVED: That the feedback arising from the discussion on the report be used to inform a further report to the Policy and Resources Committee with a more specific proposal on the scope and timing of the Town Centre Strategy.

Note: Councillor Forecast joined the meeting during this item.

86. MAIDSTONE MUSEUM CAPITAL EXPENDITURE UPDATE

The Museum Director introduced the report and set out the preferred option for the capital expenditure, which was to improve the British archaeology gallery utilising the generous offer of £100,000 from the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Fund, which the Maidstone Museum Foundation had been asked to match. The Kent Archaeological Society had expressed an enthusiastic interest in working in partnership on the refurbishment. A 5-year plan was being prepared for the Committee to review, which would include governance arrangements at the Museum.

Following feedback, the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development recommended that the capital expenditure should be used to develop a new archaeological gallery, and suggested further reports on the governance of the Museum and timescale in which any changes could be implemented.

In response to questions, the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development explained that legal advice had been sought to explore options for future governance of the Museum which would be presented to the Committee. The Bentlif Trust and the Brenchley Charity would be invited to contribute towards the plans for the refurbishment of the gallery.

RESOLVED: That

1. The preferred option to invest in a new, modern archaeological gallery with interactive digital displays, located in the Withdrawing Room be approved and a further report be presented to the Committee once draft designs have been commissioned;

2. The generous offer from the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust and the Maidstone Museum Foundation be acknowledged with grateful thanks, and that the Maidstone Museum Foundation be asked to raise matched funding;

3. A 5-year business plan be presented to the Committee before March 2022;

4. A report setting out the governance arrangements needed to deliver the 20-year plan be presented to the Committee; and

5. A report be brought back to the Committee in January 2022 to set out a simplistic timeline for the design and implementation of the new gallery and options for governance arrangements.

87. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.49pm.

2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Timeline for Gallery and Governance Update	ERL	18-Jan-22	Cllr Request		John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2022/23	ERL	18-Jan-22	Governance	Yes	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Leisure Stakeholder and Consultation Interim Update (MMMA)	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Mike Evans
Carriage Museum Options Appraisal Report	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Future of Maidstone Leisure Centre	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update		John Foster	Mike Evans
Q3 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2021/22	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Museum 5-year plan	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update		John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Reopening the Town Centre - Arts and Cultural Activities	ERL	15-Mar-22	Cllr Request		John Foster	
Recovery & Renewal - 4-month review of Community and Skills Hub - *tbc by P&R*	ERL	19-Apr-22	Cllr Request		John Foster	John Foster
Town Centre Strategy	ERL	TBC	Officer Update		Phil Coyne	Phil Coyne/Charlotte Yarnold
Review of Revised Museum Opening Hours and Working Arrangements	ERL	TBC	Cllr Request		John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Economic Development Programme: Council's role within Partnership Arrangements briefing paper	ERL	TBC	Cllr Request		John Foster	Chris Inwood
Decommissioning Public Art Policy	ERL	TBC	Officer Update		John Foster	AnnMarie Langley
Governance Arrangements to deliver the Museum's 20-Year Plan	ERL	TBC	Cllr Request	Yes	John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Pump Track Development	ERL	TBC	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Mike Evans

ECONOMIC REGENERATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE	**14 December 2021**

2nd Quarter Financial Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Authors	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client) Carly Benville, Senior Business Analyst
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2021/22 financial and performance position for the services reporting into the Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee (ERL) as at 30th September 2021 (Quarter 2). The primary focus is on:

- The 2021/22 Revenue and Capital budgets; and
- The 2021/22 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that relate to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045.

The combined reporting of the financial and performance position enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues in their proper context, reflecting the fact that the financial and performance-related fortunes of the Council are inextricably linked.

Budget Monitoring

Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for the services reporting to ERL is £0.638m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.646m, representing an underspend of £0.008m.

Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 was £1.744m against a total budget of £4.453m. Forecast spend for the year is £2.917m.

Performance Monitoring

0% (0 of 2) targetable quarterly key performance indicators reportable to the Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee achieved their Quarter 2 target.

Purpose of Report

The report enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues as at 30 September 2021.

This report makes the following Recommendations to the Committee:

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2021/22, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;

2. That the Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 be noted; and

3. That the Performance position as at Quarter 2 for 2021/22, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	14 December 2021

2nd Quarter Financial Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This report monitors actual activity against the revenue budget and other financial matters set by Council for the financial year. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is linked to the Strategic Plan and corporate priorities. The Key Performance Indicators and strategic actions are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2019-45 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Cross Cutting Objectives	This report enables any links between performance and financial matters to be identified and addressed at an early stage, thereby reducing the risk of compromising the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045, including its cross-cutting objectives.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Risk Management	This is addressed in Section 5 of this report.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Financial	Financial implications are the focus of this report through high level budget monitoring. Budget monitoring ensures that services can react quickly enough to potential resource problems. The process ensures that the Council is not faced by corporate financial problems that may prejudice the delivery of strategic priorities. Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money. The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	The budget for staffing represents a significant proportion of the direct spend of the Council and is carefully monitored. Any issues in relation to employee costs will be raised in this and future monitoring reports. Having a clear set of performance targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables the Committee to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget. There is no statutory duty to report regularly on the Council's performance. However, under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. One of the purposes of the Key Performance Indicators is to facilitate the improvement of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Council services. Regular reports on Council performance help to demonstrate best value and compliance with the statutory duty.	Senior Lawyer (Corporate Governance), MKLS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Privacy and Data Protection	The performance data is held and processed in accordance with the data protection principles contained in the Data Protection Act 2018 and in line with the Data Quality Policy, which sets out the requirement for ensuring data quality. There is a program for undertaking data quality audits of performance indicators.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	There is no impact on Equalities as a result of the recommendations in this report. An EqIA would be carried out as part of a policy or service change, should one be identified.	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	The performance recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues arising.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Procurement	Performance Indicators and Strategic Milestones monitor any procurement needed to achieve the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Biodiversity & Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2025/26 - including the budget for 2021/22 - was approved by full Council on 24th February 2021. This report updates the Committee on how its services have performed over the last quarter with regard to revenue and capital expenditure against approved budgets.

1.2 This report also includes an update to the Committee on progress against its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

1.3 Attached at ***Appendix 1*** is a report setting out the revenue and capital spending position at the Quarter 2 stage. Attached at ***Appendix 2*** is a report setting out the position for the KPIs for the corresponding period.

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2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

2.1 There are no matters for decision in this report. The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to take further action depending on the matters reported here.

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3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 In considering the current position on the Revenue budget, the Capital Programme and KPIs at the end of September 2021, the Committee can choose to note this information or could choose to take further action.

3.2 The Committee is requested to note the content of the report as no further actions are required.

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4. RISK

4.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications.

4.2 The Council produced a balanced budget for both revenue and capital income and expenditure for 2021/22. The budget is set against a backdrop of limited resources and a difficult economic climate, even before the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic became clear. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives the Committee the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.

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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The KPIs update ("Performance Monitoring") is reported to service committees quarterly: Communities, Housing & Environment Committee; Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee; and the Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee. Each committee will receive a report on the relevant priority action areas. The report is also presented to the Policy & Resources Committee, reporting on the priority areas of "A Thriving Place", "Safe, Clean and Green", "Homes and Communities" and "Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure".

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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 The Quarter 2 Budget & Performance Monitoring reports are being considered by the relevant Service Committees during November and December 2021, including a full report to the Policy & Resources Committee on 24th November 2021.

6.2 The Council could choose not to monitor its budget and/or the Strategic Plan and/or make alternative performance management arrangements, such as the frequency of reporting. This is not recommended as it could lead to action not being taken against financial and/or other performance during the year, and the Council failing to deliver its priorities.

6.3 There remains uncertainty regarding the Council's financial position beyond 2021/22, arising from the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and the Council's role in responding to this. Future finance reports to this committee will ensure that members are kept up to date with this situation as it develops.

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7. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Second Quarter Budget Monitoring 2021/22
- Appendix 2: Second Quarter Performance Monitoring 2021/22

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Appendix 1

Second Quarter Financial Update 2021/22

Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee
14th December 2021
Lead Officer: Mark Green
Report Authors: Ellie Dunnet/Paul Holland

Contents

Part A

Executive Summary & Overview

This report provides members with the financial position as at 30 September 2021, covering activity for both the Council as a whole and this committee's revenue and capital accounts for the second quarter of 2021/22.

Members will be aware of the significant uncertainty in the 2021/22 budget estimates arising from the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, both in relation to demands on the Council to respond and the speed of local economic recovery. Financial support from central government received during 2020/21 continues to support specific activities, and the unringfenced Covid-19 grant of £860,000 will be used to support recovery and renewal activities.

In addition, the Council will shortly be applying for the final round of funding under the government's sales, fees and charges compensation scheme covering income losses between April – June 2021 measured against the 2020/21 income budget. This is expected to be the final allocation of unringfenced Covid-19 funding from central government.

The headlines for Quarter 2 are as follows:

<u>Part B: Revenue budget – Q2 2021/22</u>

- Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for the services reporting to this committee is £0.638m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.646m, representing an underspend of £0.008m.

<u>Part C: Capital budget – Q2 2021/22</u>

- Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 was £1.744m against a total budget of £4.453m. Forecast spend for the year is £2.917m.

Part B

Second Quarter Revenue Budget 2021/22

B2) Revenue Budget

B1.1 The table below provides a detailed summary on the budgeted net income position for ERL services at the end of Quarter 2. The financial figures are presented on an accruals basis (e.g. expenditure for goods and services received, but not yet paid for, is included).

ERL Revenue Budget & Outturn – Quarter 2

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
Cost Centre	**Approved Budget for Year £000**	**Budget to 30 September 2021 £000**	**Actual £000**	**Variance £000**	**Forecast 31 March 2022 £000**	**Forecast Variance 31 March 2022 £000**
Cultural Development Arts	12	6	4	2	12	0
Museum	19	-4	-29	26	-6	26
Carriage Museum	4	1	2	-1	4	0
Museum-Grant Funded Activities	0	-3	-29	26	0	0
Hazlitt Arts Centre	292	155	134	21	292	0
Festivals and Events	-25	-24	-24	0	-25	0
Lettable Halls	-4	-2	-6	4	-4	0
Community Halls	63	34	23	12	63	0
Leisure Centre	-176	-88	14	-102	-74	-102
Mote Park Adventure Zone	-72	-36	-88	53	-124	53
Cobtree Golf Course	-35	0	0	0	-35	0
Mote Park Cafe	-33	-16	-30	14	-33	0
Tourism	18	9	-7	16	18	0
Museum Shop	-21	-11	1	-11	-21	0
Maintenance of Closed Churchyards	11	6	0	6	11	0
Sandling Road Site	26	13	13	0	26	0
Town Centre Management Sponsorship	11	11	11	-0	11	0
Business Terrace	82	72	76	-4	82	0
Business Terrace Expansion (Phase 3)	-11	-5	33	-39	48	-59
Market	-41	-7	45	-52	14	-55
Economic Dev - Promotion & Marketing	13	12	4	8	13	0
Leisure Services Section	56	50	46	4	56	0
Cultural Services Section	412	206	206	0	412	0
Visitor Economy Section	117	59	57	1	117	0
Economic Development Section	223	129	106	23	223	0
Market Section	87	43	33	11	87	0
Head of Regeneration and Economic Development	103	52	44	8	103	0
Salary Slippage	-34	-17	0	-17	-34	0
Total	**1,099**	**646**	**638**	**8**	**1,236**	**-138**

B1.2 The table shows that at the end of the second quarter overall net expenditure for the services reporting to ERL is £0.638m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.646m, representing an underspend of £0.008m.

B1.3 The table indicates that in certain areas, significant variances to the budgeted income levels have emerged during the second quarter of the year. The reasons for the more significant variances are explored in section B2 below.

B2) Variances

B2.1 The most significant variances for this Committee are as follows:

	Positive Variance Q2	Adverse Variance Q2	Year End Forecast Variance
Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	£000		
Leisure Centre – As part of the management contract with Serco the council receives annual income of £0.2m. This has been on hold whilst negotiations with Serco over losses incurred during the pandemic have been taking place, but these payments are expected to resume shortly.		-102	-102
Mote Park Adventure Zone – This variance is a provision that was raised in 2020/21 for the management fee which has been delayed due to Covid-19 issues.	53		53
Business Terrace Phase 3 – A number of offices remain vacant, and the Council also now has empty rates liability on some of these.		-38	-58
Market – Letting income for stalls and the hall have been lower than forecast for the first two quarters, but income is expected to recover to normal levels for the remainder of the year.		-52	-55

Part C

Second Quarter Capital Budget 2021/22

B1) Capital Budget: Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee (ERL)

B1.1 The position of the 2021/22 ERL element of the Capital Programme at the Quarter 2 stage is presented in Table 3 below. The budget for 2021/22 includes resources brought forward from 2020/21.

ERL Capital Programme 2021/22 (@ Quarter 2)

Capital Programme Heading	Adjusted Estimate 2021/22 £000	Actual to September 2021 £000	Budget Remaining £000	Q3 Profile £000	Q4 Profile £000	Projected Total Expenditure £000	Projected Slippage to 2022/23 £000
Economic Regeneration & Leisure							
Mote Park Visitor Centre & Estate Services Building	2,776	396	2,380	500	500	1,396	1,380
Mote Park Lake - Dam Works	672	87	584	100	50	237	434
Mall Bus Station Redevelopment	1,006	1,261	-255	23		1,284	-278
Total	**4,453**	**1,744**	**2,710**	**623**	**550**	**2,917**	**1,537**

B1.2 Comments on the variances in the table above are as follows:

Mote Park Visitor Centre & Estate Services Building – Construction works are now underway, and the new centre will open in 2022.

Mote Park Lake Dam Works – This scheme is now substantially complete, although some works to a sluice gate are yet to be completed. The figures in the appendix for these works are indicative pending an update on the actual costs of these works.

Mall Bus Station Redevelopment – Tender prices for the project came back higher than had been budgeted for. Rather than try and find a cost engineering solution that may have resulted in a reduced specification it was decided to use £0.3m additional funding from the Business Rates Pilot Projects Reserve to allow the project to proceed as planned.

ERL: Quarter 2 Performance Report

Key to performance ratings

RAG Rating	
🔴	Target not achieved
⚠	Target slightly missed (within 10%)
✅	Target met
📈	Data Only

Direction	
⬆	Performance has improved
▬	Performance has been sustained
⬇	Performance has declined
N/A	No previous data to compare

Performance Summary

RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A[1]	Total
KPIs	0	0	2	4	6
Direction	**Up**	**No Change**	**Down**	**N/A**	**Total**
Last Quarter	0	0	4	2	6
Last Year	2	0	2	2	6

- 0% 0 of 2 targetable quarterly key performance indicators (KPIs) reportable to this Committee achieved their Quarter 2 (Q2) target[1].
- Compared to last quarter (Q1 2021/22), performance for 100% (4) of (4) KPIs has declined, with 0 KPIs improving or sustaining performance.
- Compared to last year (Q2 2020/21), performance for 50% (2) of (4) KPIs has improved, and 50% (2) of (4) KPIs has declined.

Economy

Performance Indicator	Q2 2021/22				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend	Long Trend
Footfall in the Town Centre	2,535,553	2,959,104	🔴	⬇	⬆
Percentage of vacant retail units in the town centre	Annual KPI				

The "**Footfall in Town Centre**" KPI achieved an outcome of 2,535,553 against a target of 2,959,104, missing its target by more than 10%. This is also slightly lower than the footfall achieved in Q1 (2,588,741). When comparing to the same quarter last year, the footfall count this year was 11.5% higher.

As public confidence continues to grow and companies start to request that their staff work from their premises more regularly and not from home, the number of people visiting the Town Centre is starting to recover. This indicator is tracked using one fixed camera, which counts each person that walks past it. Whilst there is no hard data available to suggest what people are visiting for, we can assume that people would be travelling to work or school, shopping, dining or leisure. As these activities begin to recover, so can we assume that footfall count will improve over time.

[1] PIs rated N/A are not included in the summary calculations

Percentage of unemployed people in Maidstone (out-of-work benefits) [NOMIS]					
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Month)	Long Trend (Last Year)
July 2021	4.3%				
August 2021	4.3%				
September 2021	4.2%				

Unemployment rates in Maidstone have continued to fall in this quarter, and are lower than the rates for the same period last year. However, when comparing these to 2019/20 figures, they are still considerably higher. For comparison July, August and September 2019 saw rates of 1.8%, 1.8% and 1.9% respectively.

Number of youths unemployed (18-24)					
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Month)	Long Trend (Last Year)
July 2021	840	373			
August 2021	805	373			
September 2021	775	373			

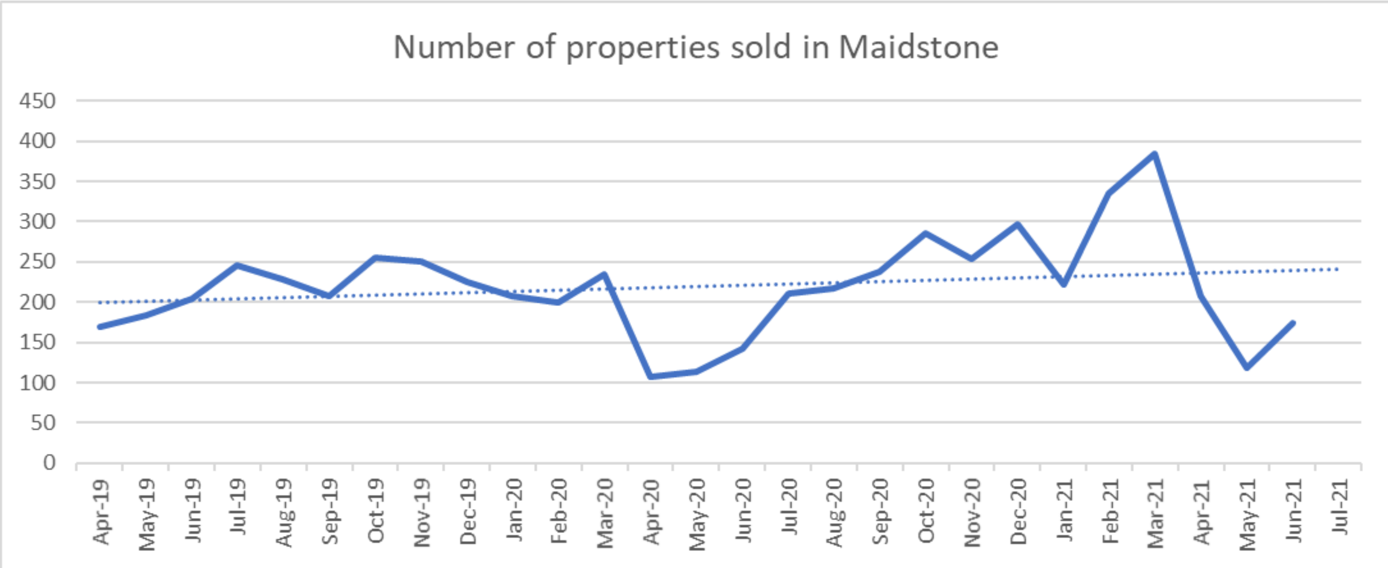
Unemployment in youths continues to fall slowly every month. The number of youths unemployed in September 2021 is 28% lower than the number of youths unemployed in September 2020. However, it is still significantly higher than the pre-pandemic figure of 365 (September 2019).

House Prices in Maidstone – July 2021				
House Type	Average price	Target	Short Trend (Last Month)	Long Trend (Last Year)
All properties	£313,619			
Detached Houses	£528,799			
Semi-detached Houses	£339,714			
Terraced Houses	£264,982			
Flats & Maisonettes	£178,140			

House prices in Maidstone have increased when comparing July 2021 to July 2020. The average house price (all properties) in July 2020 was £291,067, an increase of 7.7%. When comparing July's average to the same month, pre-pandemic, the increase is 8.7%, increasing from £288,491.

However, July 2021 figures have seen a short-term decrease when comparing to June 2021 across all property types.

Number of properties sold in Maidstone – April 2019 to June 2021



At the time of writing this report, volumes have not yet been published by HM Land Registry for quarter two. Whilst numbers appear to have been steady, and above the figures seen during the pandemic, May 2021's results show a big dip in the number of properties sold. This could be due to the changes in stamp duty exemptions that were originally planned to finish in March 2021, but at the last minute were extended until June 2021. Property sales appear to be sporadic during the first quarter of the year, but adding a trend line to the graph above shows that sales are slowly increasing.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE	**14 December 2021**

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2026/27

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out a draft new Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the Council. The new MTFS rolls forward the existing strategy to cover the five-year period 2022/23 to 2026/27 and reflects emerging budget priorities. It is currently subject to consultation with the Service Committees and will be further updated to take account of the Local Government Finance Settlement, due to be announced in December 2021, prior to final approval by Policy & Resources Committee and by Council in February 2022.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That it considers and comments on the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27 at Appendix A.

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Policy and Resources Committee	24 November 2021
Communities Housing & Environment Committee	30 November 2021
Strategic Planning & Transportation Committee	7 December 2021
Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	14 December 2021
Policy & Resources Committee	9 February 2022
Council	23 February 2022

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2026/27

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. They reflect the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.	Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Cross Cutting Objectives	The MTFS supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council's other strategic priorities.	Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Risk Management	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Financial	The budget strategy and the MTFS impact upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences of the recommendations in this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The process of developing the Strategic Plan and the associated budget strategy will identify the level of resources available for staffing over the medium term.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget and development of the MTFS and the strategic revenue projection in the ways set out in this report supports achievement of a balanced budget.	Legal Services
Privacy and Data Protection	Privacy and Data Protection is considered as part of the development of new budget proposals. There are no specific implications arising from this report.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The MFTS report scopes the possible impact of the Council's future financial position on service delivery. When a policy, service or function is developed, changed or reviewed,	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer

	an evidence based equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Should an impact be identified appropriate mitigations will be identified.	
Public Health	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Procurement	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting of 21 July 2021 Policy & Resources Committee agreed the approach and timetable for the development of an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to cover the five-year period 2022 to 2027. This report provides an update on progress and sets out a draft MTFS. The MTFS remains subject to further consultation and the government's announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23, which is expected in December 2021.

2.2 The vision and priorities set out in the Council's existing Strategic Plan are clear and remain relevant. However, within the framework of the existing Strategic Plan, priority initiatives are under development, including a new Town Centre Strategy and the commitment to invest in 1,000 new affordable homes. The governance framework within which these priorities will be delivered is also due to change, with the reintroduction of a Cabinet system in 2022.

2.3 The draft MTFS is attached as Appendix A. It sets out in financial terms how it is intended to deliver the Strategic Plan, given the Council's capacity and capability. It builds on the existing MTFS, but reflects emerging priorities and developments in the external environment.

2.4 A key outcome of the process of updating the MTFS is to set a balanced budget and agree a level of council tax for 2022/23 at the Council meeting on 23 February 2022. This report is a key step towards achieving that objective.

Revenue Projections

2.5 The MTFS incorporates revenue projections for the five year planning period. Various potential scenarios were modelled, described as adverse, neutral and favourable. Key assumptions made in the projections are as follows.

Council Tax – It has been assumed that the government continues to set a limit of 2% to increases, above which a referendum would be required (as in 2021/22), and that the Council increases Council Tax to this limit.

Business Rates - The Business Rates baseline, which dictates the amount of business rates that local authorities may retain locally, will be increased in line with inflation in 2022/23, as part of an expected roll forward of the existing 2021/22 financial settlement.

Inflation – In the neutral scenario, the core assumption is for CPI inflation of 2% over the medium term, in line with the government's target. However, it is recognised that inflation is currently higher than this level and this will create pressures, in the short term at least.

Updated Strategic Revenue Projections are set out in Appendix B.

Budget Consultation

2.6 As in previous years, and in line with legal requirements and good practice, a public consultation has been carried out to ascertain residents' views on what the Council's priorities for spending should be. The consultation attracted over 1,000 respondents and the results are considered to be statistically robust. A report on the outcomes is included at Appendix C. Respondents identified Environmental Enforcement, Parks & Open Spaces and Housing & Homelessness as the top priorities for additional expenditure. Members will no doubt wish to take these views into account when considering detailed budget proposals in January 2022.

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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft MTFS attached at Appendix A. Any changes and comments will be considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting prior to recommending a final MTFS to Council for approval in February 2022.

3.2 The Committee could choose not to comment on the draft MTFS.

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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft MTFS. This will ensure that its views are taken into account as part of the development of the MTFS.

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5. RISK

5.1 The Council's financial position is subject to a number of risks and to considerable uncertainty. In order to address this in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, it has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each meeting.

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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 Policy and Resources Committee reviewed the background to setting a new Medium Term Financial Strategy at its meeting on 21 July 2021.

6.2 The three Service Committees – Economic Regeneration & Leisure, Strategic Planning & Infrastructure and Communities, Housing & Environment – are considering the draft MTFS in the current cycle of meetings. The outcomes will be reported back to Policy & Resources Committee when it is asked to consider the MTFS again for recommendation to Council at its 9 February meeting.

6.3 A survey has recently concluded, in which residents were consulted on what they wish to see in the budget. This is attached as Appendix C.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 An outline timetable for developing the Council's Strategic Plan and the associated Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget for 2022/23 is set out below.

Date	***Meeting***	***Action***
24 November 2021	Policy and Resources Committee	Consider draft MTFS
November / December 2021	Service Committees	Consider draft MTFS
December 2021		Finalise detailed budget proposals for 2022/23
January 2022	Policy and Resources Committee, Service Committees	Consider 2022/23 budget proposals
9 February 2022	Policy and Resources Committee	Agree MTFS and 2022/23 budget proposals for recommendation to Council
23 February 2022	Council	Approve MTFS and 2022/23 budget

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27
- Appendix B: Strategic Revenue Projection 2022/23 – 2026/27
- Appendix C: Budget Consultation Survey

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDIX A

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 – 2026/27

CONTENTS

1. OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council will deliver its Strategic Plan over the next five years. The Council's Strategic Plan, agreed in December 2018, covers the period 2019 to 2045. The Strategic Plan incorporates four key objectives: embracing growth and enabling infrastructure; homes and communities; a thriving place; and safe, clean and green. Further details are set out in **Section 2.**

1.2 Delivering the Strategic Plan depends on the Council's financial capacity and capability. Accordingly, the MTFS considers the economic environment and the Council's own current financial position. The external environment (**Section 3**) is challenging because of uncertainty about the pace of recovery from Covid-19 and the risk of continuing high levels of inflation. In assessing the Council's current financial position (**Section 4**), attention therefore needs to be paid to its resilience, including the level of reserves that it holds.

1.3 Most key variables in local authority funding are determined by central government, such as the Council Tax referendum limit and the share of business rates that is retained locally. The three year Spending Review announced by the Chancellor in October 2021 set out a more favourable outcome for local government than expected but the impact at the individual authority level remains unclear. A consideration of the funding likely to be available in the future is set out in **Section 5**.

1.4 In view of these different elements of uncertainty, it is imperative that the MTFS both ensures Maidstone Council's continuing financial resilience and is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a range of potential scenarios. The Council has prepared financial projections under different scenarios, continuing a practice that has been followed for a number of years. Details of the assumptions made in the different scenarios are set out in **Section 6**.

1.5 The MTFS sets out the financial projections in **Section 7**. Various potential scenarios have been modelled, described as adverse, neutral and favourable. The table below shows projections under the neutral scenario, before taking account of budget changes, which are due to be considered by members at Service Committee meetings in January 2022.

Table 1: MTFS Revenue Projections 2022/23 – 2026/27

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Tax	18.2	18.8	19.5	20.2	20.9
Retained Business Rates	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.8
Business Rates Growth	1.2	-	0.2	0.4	0.5
Collection Fund adjustment	-0.2	-0.7	-	-	-
Budget requirement	22.7	21.7	23.3	24.3	25.2
Fees and Charges	21.9	23.3	24.5	24.9	25.4

Total Funding Available	44.6	45.0	47.8	49.2	50.6
Predicted Expenditure	43.8	47.0	48.6	49.7	50.7
Budget Surplus / Gap	0.8	-2.0	-0.8	-0.5	-0.1

In accordance with legislative requirements the Council must set a balanced budget. The MTFS sets out a proposed approach that enables the Council to do this for 2022/23.

1.6 The Council's strategic priorities are met not only through day-to-day revenue spending but also through capital investment. The Council has adopted a Capital Strategy, which sets out how investment will be carried out that delivers the strategic priorities, whilst remaining affordable and sustainable. As set out in **Section 8** below, funds have been set aside for capital investment, using prudential borrowing, and further funding may be available by taking advantage of opportunities to bid for external funding, eg the Levelling-Up Fund.

1.7 The MTFS concludes by describing the process of agreeing a budget for 2022/23, including consultation with all relevant stakeholders, in **Section 9.**

2. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRIORITIES

2.1 The Council has a Strategic Plan which was approved by Council in December 2018. It sets out four key objectives, as follows:

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Homes and Communities
- A Thriving Place
- Safe, Clean and Green.

'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure' recognises the Council's role in leading and shaping the borough as its economy and population grows. This means taking an active role in policy and master planning for key sites in the borough, and where appropriate, investing directly and delivering projects ourselves.

'Homes and communities' expresses the objective of making Maidstone a place where people love to live and can afford to live. This means providing a range of different types of housing, including affordable housing, and meeting our statutory obligations to address homelessness and rough sleeping. It also recognises that, as reflected in our Covid 19 recovery and renewal objectives and plans, we will work with our partners to improve the quality of community services and facilities and to encourage and support residents to volunteer and play a full part in their communities, the need for which has been accentuated by the impacts of the pandemic.

'A thriving place' is a borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and an enjoyable and prosperous place to live for our residents. We will work to regenerate the County town and rural service centres and will continue to grow our leisure and cultural offer. Our recovery and renewal strategy responds to the challenges in achieving this priority by identifying investment opportunities, for example bringing forward employment sites and a Town Centre Strategy for renewal and rejuvenation .

A 'safe, clean and green' place is one where the environment is protected and enhanced, where parks, green spaces, streets and public areas are looked after, well-managed and respected, and where people are and feel safe.

2.2 Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan in December 2018, the objective of 'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure' has started to be realised, for example through our work on the Innovation Centre and a new Garden Community. The Maidstone Local Plan is due to be updated and a new Town Centre Strategy will be developed, setting out a clear framework for delivery of regeneration and growth.

2.3 Amongst initiatives to help make Maidstone a 'Thriving Place' are MBC investment at Lockmeadow and on the Parkwood Industrial Estate. Preparations for the future include options appraisal for our leisure provision. We will continue to leverage the Council's borrowing power, if appropriate in conjunction with partners, to realise our ambitions for the borough.

2.4 Our 'Homes and Communities' aspirations are being achieved by investment in temporary accommodation and the Trinity Centre and the Leader's commitment to build 1,000 new affordable homes.

2.5 The objective of a 'Safe, Clean and Green' place has been emphasised by the Council's commitment to a carbon reduction target and the capital investment to help enable this to be delivered and timely preparation for new waste management arrangements.

2.6 Within the framework of the existing Strategic Plan, the Council is therefore prioritising:

- development of the Local Plan and related strategies and policies, in particular the Town Centre Strategy
- continued investment to make Maidstone a thriving place
- investment in 1,000 new affordable homes
- measures to enable the Council's carbon reduction target to be met
- recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic.

The governance framework within which these priorities will be delivered is due to change, with the reintroduction of a Cabinet system in 2022, which will itself have financial implications in terms of potential additional support costs.

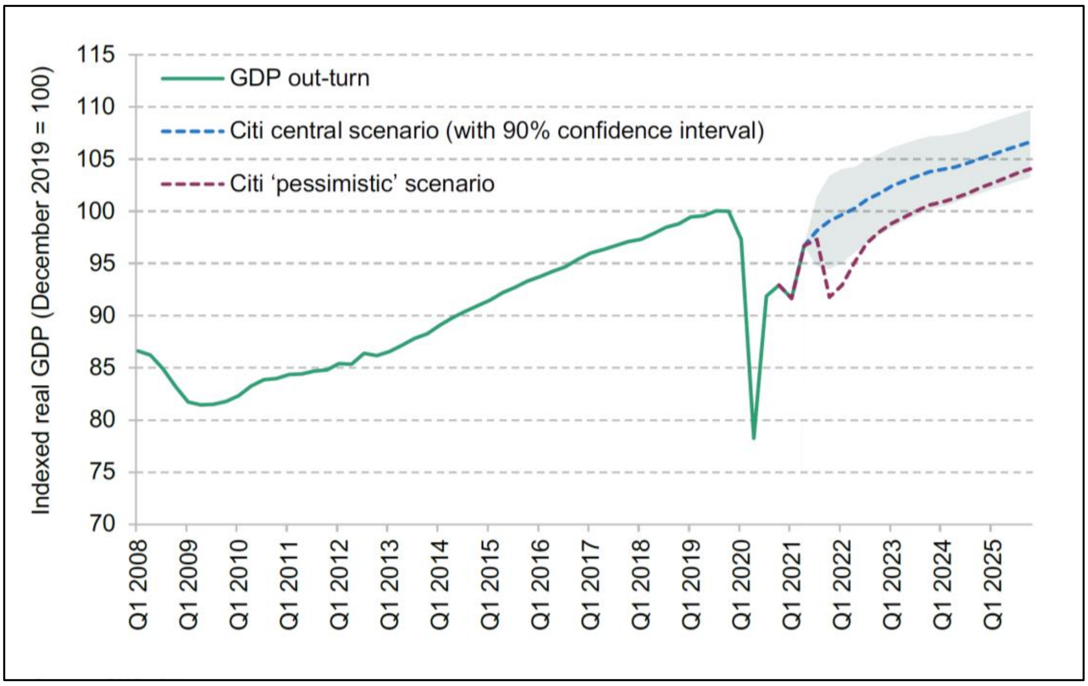
2.7 The overall funding envelope within which these priorities must be delivered remains broadly unchanged for 2022/23, meaning that savings will be required in some areas in order to fund growth in others, as well as to meet the savings already identified and agreed in earlier MTFS and budget setting decisions. Looking further ahead, considerable uncertainty remains about the financial position for future years, meaning that the financial strategy must remain flexible. The financial implications are set out in section 7 below.

3. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Macro outlook

3.1 The UK economy initially recovered strongly from the Covid recession. However, a combination of supply shortages, withdrawal of furlough and government support for businesses, and a growing reluctance to spend on the part of consumers, are all weighing down the recovery. It remains to be seen how much long-term damage Covid will do to the economy, but at present the economy remains significantly smaller than it would have been in the absence of the pandemic. This slower growth has been exacerbated by Brexit, which the ONS estimates to have led to a permanent 1% reduction in the size of the economy.

Figure 1: Real GDP in central and pessimistic scenarios, 2008-2025



Source: IFS Green Budget 2021

3.2 The recovery has been uneven, with some sectors (eg transport and storage) recovering much more quickly than others (eg retail and hospitality), which points towards a permanent adjustment in the structure of the economy.

3.3 Inflation is now running at 3.1% (September 2021). This is driven by a number of factors, some of which may only be transitory. For example, the cost of energy can be expected to stabilise, as can price increases caused by supply bottlenecks. However, inflation arising from wage increase expectations and the depreciation of the pound may be more difficult to eradicate.

Public Finances

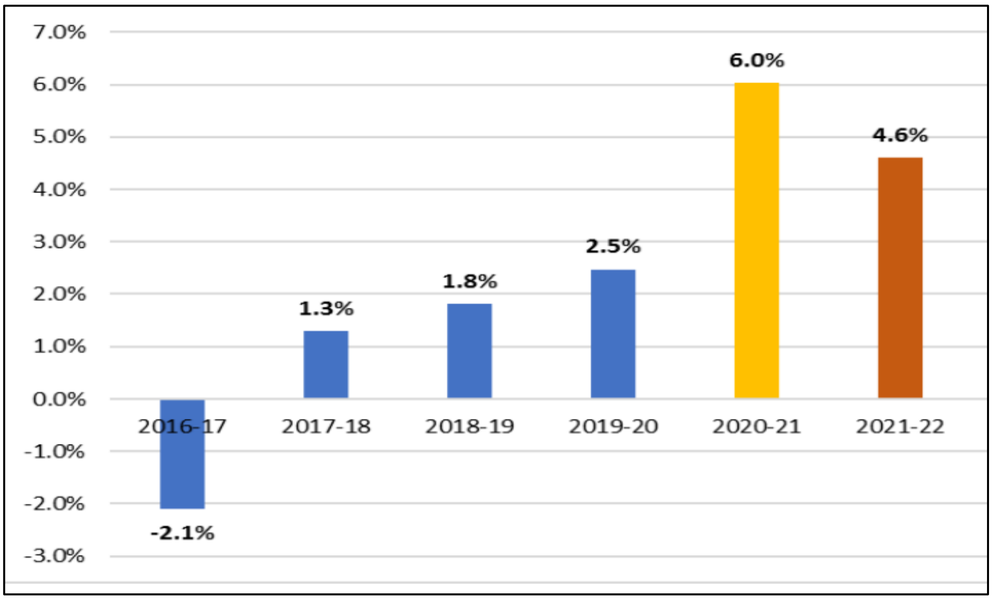
3.4 Covid has led to a massive increase in public expenditure. The government has increased taxes to help pay for this, and seems to accept that the public sector will account for a permanently higher share of national economy for the foreseeable future. Currently it accounts for 42% of GDP, the highest level for over 50 years.

3.5 The increase in public expenditure has been concentrated in specific areas. Above all, health expenditure, which was already rising in proportion to total public expenditure in response to demographic trends, is expected to continue to grow more quickly than other areas of public expenditure.

Local Government Funding

3.6 For many years, local government expenditure has seen steeper reductions and lower rates of growth than overall public expenditure. However, in recent years, the reduction in central government funding for local government has been mitigated by increases in locally generated sources of income, with Council Tax rising by more than the overall rate of inflation. Upper tier authorities in particular have been able to raise additional tax through a social care precept. This has allowed the government to claim that so-called 'Council spending power' has increased.

Figure 2: Changes in Council Spending Power



Source: Pixel Spending Review Briefing 2021

3.7 Authorities like Maidstone no longer receive unringfenced central government grant (Revenue Support Grant - RSG) and are instead largely reliant on Council Tax for their funding. The only impact of increases in central government allocations to local government is a higher share of business rates income collected locally.

3.8 The apparent benefit of higher Council Tax income is not felt as strongly as it could be, because the local government tax base has gradually moved out of synch with the reality of local service pressures. Council Tax continues to be based on 1991 valuations, which means that authorities in the south-east of England have seen much lower increases in income than the increase in house prices would imply. Meanwhile, Council Tax increases in more deprived areas do not provide adequate compensation for the loss of central government grant.

3.9 The other main element of local government funding, beside central government grant and Council Tax, is Business Rates. The 2010-15 Coalition Government transferred a notional 50% of locally-collected Business Rates income back to local government, but the requirement to adjust the amount of business rates retained between authorities, based on respective service needs, means that authorities with an active commercial sector and low perceived levels of need, like Maidstone, retain a low proportion of business rates (just 7% in Maidstone's case). It was originally intended to increase the 50% share of business rates retained locally to 75%, but the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) has now signalled that this is not a government priority.

3.10 Although local government funding is now both complex and inconsistent with good fiscal practice, central government has not addressed the issues. The lack of clarity arising was mitigated to an extent in 2015, when David Cameron's Conservative government provided some certainty for local government by announcing a four-year settlement, albeit that this incorporated a reduction in funding. However, since 2019/20, local government funding settlements have been announced on an annual basis, usually just three months before the start of the new financial year.

3.11 The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a three-year Spending Review on 27 October 2021. This included assumptions about real terms growth in Council Spending Power (the government's preferred measure) over the next three years. It should be noted that the calculation of Council Spending Power assumes that local authorities will increase Council Tax by the maximum permissible without a referendum, which in Maidstone's case is a 2% increase. The term spending power should not be conflated with actual resources available.

3.12 Details of what the overall increase in spending power means for individual authorities remain to be announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement, which is due in December 2021. A potential issue for Maidstone is that an 'across the board' increase in funding for Councils would use the current basis of assessing funding requirements, which in 2019/20 indicated that the Council would have to pay negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to government, rather than receiving RSG from the government. The first element of any increase in funding could therefore simply be used to reverse negative RSG, giving no benefit to the Council.

3.13 Although the Spending Review covered three years (2022/23 to 2024/25), it is not clear whether this will translate into a three-year local government funding settlement.

3.14 The Chancellor's announcements included various capital funds (£300m grant funding to unlock brownfield sites, £1.5bn to regenerate unused land, UK Shared Prosperity Fund £2.6bn, Levelling-Up Fund £4.8bn). Access to this funding will be through a bidding process; it is not clear what the criteria will be. Reflecting its low standing in the levelling up agenda, Maidstone is a Priority 2 area.

Conclusion

3.15 The economic recovery from Covid-19 appears to be slowing down, and is accompanied by higher levels of inflation, which it may prove difficult to eradicate. Whilst public expenditure has increased to levels not seen for many years, the main beneficiary has been the NHS rather than local government. The three-year Spending Review announced by the Chancellor in October 2021 set out a more favourable outcome for local government than expected but the impact at the individual authority level remains unclear.

4. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

4.1 As a lower tier authority, Maidstone Borough Council is not subject to the extreme pressures currently faced by upper tier authorities arising in particular with respect to adults' and children's social care. It is nevertheless appropriate to assess the Council's financial resilience. There are a number of elements that contribute to financial resilience, according to CIPFA[1]:

– level of reserves
– quality of financial management, including use of performance information
– effective planning and implementation of capital investment
– ability to deliver budget savings if necessary
– risk management.

An assessment is set out below of how the Council performs on these measures.

Level of Reserves

4.2 Maidstone Borough Council's financial position, as shown by its most recent balance sheet, is as follows (unallocated General Fund balance highlighted, previous year shown for comparative purposes).

Table 2: Maidstone Borough Council balance sheet

	31.3.20 £ million	31.3.21 £ million
Long term assets	158.6	163.5
Current assets	28.0	36.5
Current liabilities	-44.0	-57.3
Long term liabilities	-80.8	-96.9
Net assets	61.8	45.9
Unusable reserves	-44.6	-12.2
	17.2	33.7
Represented by:		
Unallocated General Fund balance	8.8	10.3
Earmarked balances	7.8	22.9
Capital receipts reserve	0.6	0.5
Total usable reserves	17.2	33.7

4.3 The main changes between the two balance sheet dates and the principal reasons are as follows:

[1] CIPFA Financial Management Code, Guidance Notes, p 51

Increase in current liabilities

Government grants, eg for distribution to local businesses, which have been received by the Council but not yet deployed, are accounted for as liabilities at the balance sheet date.

Increase in long term liabilities

The liability to pay employee pensions in the future is re-assessed by actuaries each year. When interest rates are low, as at present, this leads to an increased liability as the discount rate applied to the obligation is correspondingly low.

Increase in earmarked balances

The main element in the increase is a £14.7 million timing difference, arising because the Collection Fund deficit incurred in 2021/22 as a result of Covid-19 has to be accounted for in 2022/23.

Decrease in unusable reserves

This is the impact on reserves of the increased pension liability and the Collection Fund timing difference (as described above), ie an equal and opposite amount to these increases in liabilities / earmarked balances.

4.4 The maintenance of the unallocated general fund balance is an essential part of the Council's strategic financial planning, as this amount represents the funds available to address unforeseen financial pressures.

4.5 For local authorities there is no statutory minimum level of unallocated reserves. It is for each Council to take a view on the required level having regard to matters relevant to its local circumstances. CIPFA guidance issued in 2014 states that to assess the adequacy of unallocated general reserves the Chief Financial Officer should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing their authority. The assessment of risks should include external risks, such as natural disasters, as well as internal risks such as the achievement of savings.

4.6 Maidstone Council historically set £2 million as a minimum level for unallocated reserves. In the light of the heightened risk environment facing the Council, it was agreed when setting the 2021/22 budget that this minimum should be increased to £4 million.

Current Position

4.7 Current indications are that the Council will deliver a balanced budget for 2021/22, allowing the level of reserves to be maintained.

Financial management

4.8 Financial management at Maidstone Borough Council contains a number of elements. Officers and members are fully engaged in the annual budget setting process, which means that there is a clear understanding of financial plans and the resulting detailed budgets

4.9 Detailed financial reports are prepared and used on a monthly basis by managers, and on a quarterly basis by elected members, to monitor performance against the budget. Reports to members are clear, reliable and timely, enabling a clear focus on any areas of variance from the plan.

4.10 Financial reports are complemented by performance indicators, which are reported both at the service level to the wider leadership team, and at a corporate level to members. Member reports on performance indicators are aligned with the financial reports, so that members see a comprehensive picture of how services are performing.

4.11 Financial management and reporting is constantly reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purposes and meets the organisation's requirements. Quarterly financial reports to members have been redesigned over the last two years to make them more user-friendly.

4.12 Where variances arise, prompt action is taken to address them. Action plans are put in place at an early stage if at appears that there is likely to be a budget overspend.

4.13 The authority consistently receives clean external and internal audit opinions.

Capital investment

4.14 Capital expenditure proposals are developed in response to the Council's strategic priorities as part of the annual budget cycle. Capital investment must fall within one of the four following categories: required for statutory reasons, eg to ensure that Council property meets health and safety requirements; schemes that are self-funding and meet Strategic Plan priority outcomes; other schemes that are clearly focused on Strategic Plan priority outcomes; and other priority schemes which will attract significant external funding. All schemes within the capital programme are subject to appropriate option appraisal. Any appraisal must comply with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

4.15 Member oversight is ensured, first by inclusion of schemes in the capital programme that is approved as part of the annual budget setting process. Subsequently, prior to any capital commitment being entered into, a report setting out details of the capital scheme is considered by the relevant service committee.

4.16 The Council has a corporate project management framework that applies to most of the projects included within the capital programme. This provides for designation of a project manager and sponsor and includes a mechanism for progress on major projects to be reported to a Strategic Capital Investment Board.

4.17 Financial monitoring of capital projects is incorporated within the quarterly reports to Service Committees.

Ability to deliver budget savings

4.18 The Council has a good track record of delivering budget savings, whilst sustaining and investing in services. Savings initiatives are planned so far as possible across the five-year period of the MTFS, rather than the focus being simply on achieving whatever savings are necessary in order to balance the budget for the coming year.

4.19 A common criticism of local authority financial planning is that proposed savings are often over-optimistic and are not based on realistic evidence of what is achievable. The Council aims to mitigate this risk with a robust process for developing budget savings proposals:

- New and updated savings proposals are sought on a regular annual cycle, with Service Managers typically briefed on the savings remit in August/September

- Savings proposals are then developed over a period of around two months

- Savings proposals have to be formally documented and signed off by the Service Head who will be responsible for delivering them.

4.20 Once savings have been built into the budget, their achievement is monitored as part of the regular financial management process described above.

Risk management

4.21 The Council's MTFS is subject to a high degree of risk and ?uncertainty. In order to address this in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, the Council has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each meeting.

4.22 The major risk areas that have been identified as potentially threatening the Medium Term Financial Strategy are as follows.

- Financial impact from resurgence of Covid-19 virus
- Fees and Charges fail to deliver sufficient income
- Adverse impact from changes in local government funding
- Collection targets for Council Tax and Business Rates missed
- Adverse financial consequences from a disorderly Brexit
- Capital programme cannot be funded
- Planned savings are not delivered
- Failure to contain expenditure within agreed budgets
- Inflation rate predictions in MTFS are inaccurate
- Constraints on council tax increases
- Litigation costs exceed budgeted provisions

- Commercialisation fails to deliver additional income
- Business Rates pool fails to generate sufficient growth
- Shared services fail to meet budget
- Council holds insufficient balances
- Increased complexity of government regulation.

It is recognised that this is not an exhaustive list. By reviewing risks on a regular basis, it is expected that any major new risks will be identified and appropriate mitigations developed.

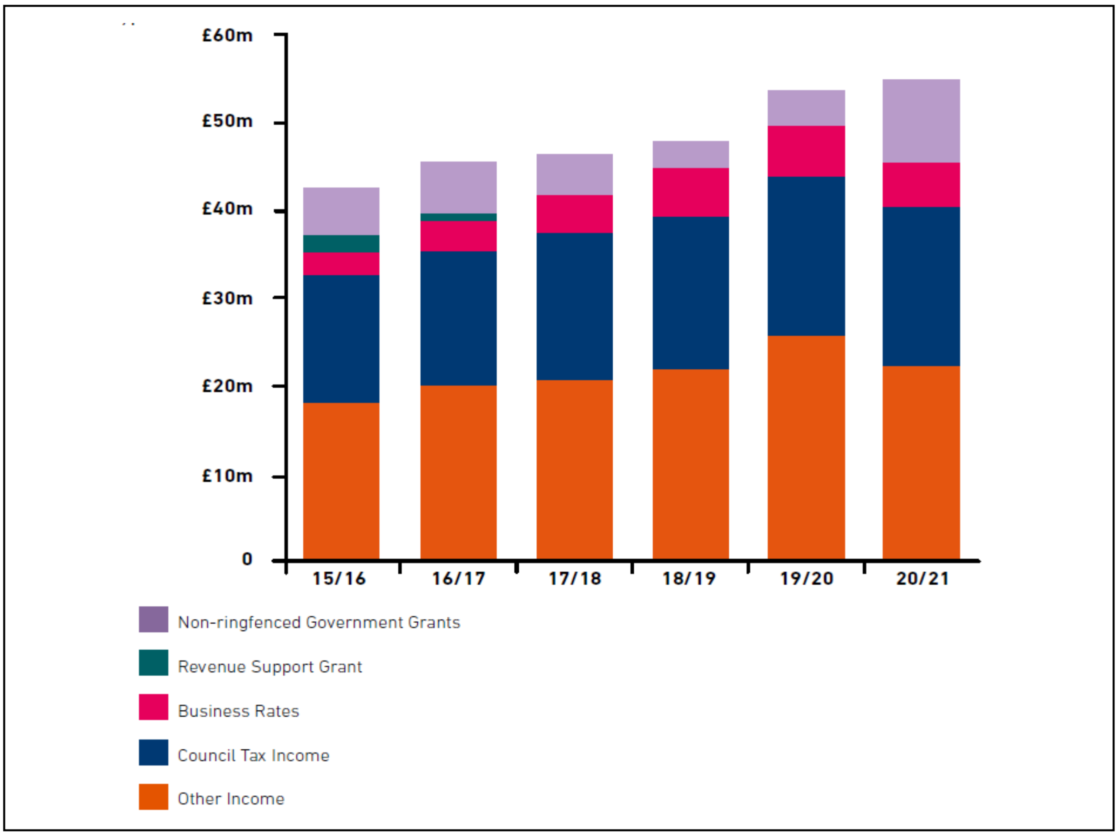
Conclusion

4.23 When assessed against the CIPFA criteria for financial resilience, the Council can be seen to have adequate reserves in the short term and to be positioned well to manage the financial challenges it will face. The following section considers whether this position is sustainable.

5. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

5.1 The Council's main sources of income are Council Tax and self-generated income from a range of other sources, including parking, planning fees and property investments. It no longer receives direct government support in the form of Revenue Support Grant; although it collects around £60 million of business rates annually, it retains only a small proportion of this.

Figure 3: Sources of Income (£ million)



Council Tax

5.2 Council Tax is a product of the tax base and the level of tax set by Council. The tax base is a value derived from the number of chargeable residential properties within the borough and their band, which is based on valuation ranges, adjusted by all discounts and exemptions.

5.3 The tax base has increased steadily in recent years, reflecting the number of new housing developments in the borough. See table below.

Table 3: Number of Dwellings in Maidstone

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of dwellings	69,633	70,843	71,917	73,125	75,034
% increase compared with previous year	1.63%	1.74%	1.52%	1.68%	2.61%

Note: Number of dwellings is reported each year based on the position shown on the valuation list in September.

5.4 Whilst the effect of the increased number of dwellings is to increase the Council Tax base, this is offset by the cost of reliefs for council tax payers, in particular Council Tax support, and any change in the percentage of Council Tax collected. Covid-19 has led to both an increase in the number of Council Tax support claimants and a fall in the collection rate, which is likely to offset to an extent the benefit of an increased number of dwellings. The increase in the number of households and people living in the borough also impacts on the cost of service delivery, for example refuse collection and street cleansing.

5.5 The level of council tax increase for 2022/23 is a decision that will be made by Council based on a recommendation made by the Policy and Resources Committee. The Council's ability to increase the level of council tax is limited by the requirement to hold a referendum for increases over a government set limit. The referendum limit for 2021/22 was the greater of 2% or £5.00 for Band D taxpayers. Council Tax was increased by the maximum possible, ie £5.31 (2%).

Other income

5.6 Other income is an increasingly important source of funding for the Council. It includes the following sources of income:

- Parking
- Shared services (as agreed in collaboration agreements and where MBC is the employer)
- Commercial property
- Planning fees
- Cremations
- Garden waste collection
- Income generating activity in parks

Where fees and charges are not set by statute, we apply a policy that guides officers and councillors in setting the appropriate level based on demand, affordability and external factors. Charges should be maximised within the limits of the policy, but customer price sensitivity must be taken into account, given that in those areas where we have discretion to set fees and charges, customers are not necessarily obliged to use our services.

5.7 Other income, particularly parking, was seriously affected by Covid-19. Whilst the government has committed to compensating local authorities for 75% of lost income above a 5% threshold for the first quarter of 2021/22, there has been no guarantee of ongoing support in the event that income fails to return to pre-Covid-19 levels. Commercial property income was adversely affected by the pandemic, and whilst it has now recovered, it remains potentially at risk from a resurgence.

Business Rates

5.8 Under current funding arrangements, local government retains 50% of the business rates it collects. The aggregate amount collected by local government is redistributed between individual authorities on the basis of perceived need, so that in practice Maidstone Borough Council receives only around 7% of the business rates that it collects.

5.9 Prior to the 2017 General Election, the Government was preparing to move to 100% business rates retention with effect from 2020. This was subsequently reduced to 75%, but the Secretary of State has now announced that this is no longer a government priority.

5.10 The amount of business rates retained by individual authorities is currently based on a needs assessment that dates back to 2013/14. A reset is expected at some point, based on a 'Fair Funding Review'. The overall amounts to be allocated as part of the Fair Funding Review are yet to be determined. It is therefore difficult to predict with any degree of accuracy whether the proportion of business rates retained by Maidstone will remain the same, increase or decrease.

5.11 The current local government funding regime gives authorities the opportunity to pool their business rates income and retain a higher share of growth as compared with a notional baseline set in 2013/14. Maidstone has been a member of the Kent Business Rates pool since 2014/15. Its 30% share of the growth arising from membership of the pool has hitherto been allocated to a reserve which is used for specific projects that form part of the Council's economic development strategy. A further 30% represents a Growth Fund, spent in consultation with Kent County Council. This has been used to support the Maidstone East development.

5.12 It should be noted that, when re-allocating business rates according to need, following a Fair Funding Review, the business rates baseline is likely to be reset, so all growth accumulated to that point will be reallocated between local authorities as described in paragraph 5.10 above.

5.13 Total projected business rates income for 2021/22, and the ways in which it is planned to deploy it, are summarised in the table below.

Table 4: Projected Business Rates Income 2021/22

	£000	
Business Rates baseline income	3,430	Included in base budget
Growth in excess of the baseline	620	Included in base budget
Pooling gain (MBC share)	349	Funds Economic Development projects
Pooling gain (Growth Fund)	349	Spent in consultation with KCC, eg on Maidstone East
Total	4,748	

5.14 These are budgeted amounts. The actual amounts received will be lower if Covid-19 continues to have an adverse impact on collection performance.

Revenue Support Grant

5.15 Maidstone no longer benefits directly from central government support in the form of Revenue Support Grant, as it is considered to have a high level of resources and low needs. In fact, Councils in this situation were due to be penalised by the government under the previous four-year funding settlement, through a mechanism to levy a 'tariff / top-up adjustment' – effectively negative Revenue Support Grant. Maidstone was due to pay negative RSG of £1.589 million in 2019/20. However, the government faced considerable pressure to waive negative RSG and removed it in the 2019/20 and subsequent Local Government Finance Settlements.

5.16 Any increase in overall funding for local authorities could simply be used to reverse negative RSG for those authorities where it was payable. More generally, a needs-based distribution of funding will continue to create anomalies like negative RSG, so it cannot be assumed that the threat of an adverse impact, such as Maidstone was due to experience in 2019/20, has gone away.

Conclusion

5.17 It can be seen that ongoing revenue resources are subject to uncertainty, owing to the economic environment and lack of clarity about the government's plans for funding local government. The previous section indicated that the Council's reserves, while adequate, do not leave it with a large amount of flexibility. This puts a premium on accurate forecasting and strong financial management.

6. SCENARIO PLANNING

6.1 Owing to uncertainty arising from the economic environment, and from the lack of clarity about what the government's plans for local government funding will mean for the Council, financial projections have been prepared for three different scenarios, as follows.

Favourable

There is strong economic growth, with inflation pressures contained within the government's long term target rate of 2%. This allows the Council's external income to recover to pre-Covid levels in 2022/23 and grow strongly thereafter. New house building continues at pre-Covid levels (ie around 2% growth per annum). Cost pressures are contained, allowing scope for budget growth.

Neutral

Growth is slower, with external income returning to pre-Covid levels over a period of 3-4 years. There continues to be growth in the Council Tax base, but constraints in the construction sector mean there is a slow-down for the first 2-3 years of the planning period. The Council maintains existing service levels and is able to fund inflationary increases in expenditure.

Adverse

Government measures to stimulate the economy are constrained by the economy's capacity to grow and the need to keep public expenditure under control. Capacity constraints and low economic growth compared with other national economies lead to prolonged inflation in excess of the government's 2% target. As a result, there is minimal growth in Council external income and increased cost pressures lead to spending cuts in order to ensure that statutory services are maintained.

Details of key assumptions underlying each of these scenarios are set out below.

Council Tax

6.2 It is assumed that the Council will take advantage of any flexibility offered by central government and will increase Council Tax up to the referendum limit, which is 2% in 2022/23. This is consistent with the Government's spending power assumptions.

6.3 The other key assumption regarding Council Tax is the change in the Council Tax base. The number of properties in Maidstone has grown by over 1.5% for the past four years. However, if there is a downturn in the economy, this rate of increase could fall. Moreover, Covid-19 is likely to reduce the amount of Council Tax collectible from each household. Assumptions are as follows:

	22/23	23/24 onwards
Favourable	2.5%	2.0%
Neutral	2.0%	1.5%
Adverse	1.5%	1.0%

Business Rates

6.4 For 2022/23 the government is rolling forward the existing arrangements. Business rates are frozen for ratepayers but local authorities will be compensated with an increase in the business rates baseline to reflect inflation.

6.5 After 2023, the proportion of business rates retained by the authority is likely to be adjusted to reflect the findings of the Fair Funding Review. It is very difficult to predict what this will mean in practice. However, for the purposes of revenue projections, a number of assumptions have been made.

6.6 A further factor to be considered is the resetting of the government's business rates baseline. This represents the level above which the Council benefits from a share in business rates growth. It is likely that the government will reset the baseline in order to redistribute resources from those areas that have benefitted most from business rates growth in the years since the current system was introduced in 2013, to those areas that have had lower business rates growth. Accordingly, cumulative business rates growth has been removed from the projections for 2023/24, then is gradually reinstated from 2024/25.

6.7 Given these assumptions, the specific assumptions for business rates growth in each scenario are as follows:

	2022/23		2023/24 onwards	
	Baseline growth	Local growth	Baseline growth	Local growth
Favourable	5.0%	0.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Neutral	2.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Adverse	-5.0%	-10.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Inflation

6.8 CPI inflation is currently (September 2021) running at 3.1%. The Bank of England expects it to peak at around 5% in April 2022 before falling back materially in the second half of the year. For the purpose of forecasting, it is assumed that the government's target rate of inflation is 2% is achieved over the medium term in the favourable and neutral scenarios. A higher rate of 3% is assumed in the adverse scenario.

Pay inflation

6.9 Pay is the Council's single biggest item of expenditure, accounting for around 50% of total costs. Although the Council sets pay rates independently of any national agreements, in practice it has to pay attention to overall public sector and local authority pay settlements, as these affect the labour market in which the Council operates. It is assumed for the first three years of the MTFS planning period that the annual increase will be 2%. An additional amount of 1% has been allowed for in pay inflation assumptions, arising from the annual cost of performance related incremental increases for staff, giving a total assumed increase of 3%.

6.10 Whilst the planning assumption remains a 2% pay increase, it is important that the Council continues to pay a competitive rate in order to retain and attract staff. This position is therefore under review. The Council maintains a corporate contingency budget which allows a measure of flexibility if a higher increase than 2%, or market factor supplements for in-demand roles, are required in order to keep pace with the job market.

Fees and charges

6.11 Fees and charges are affected by changes both in price levels and in volume. The projections imply that the level of fees and charges will increase in line with overall inflation assumptions, to the extent that the Council is able to increase them. In practice, it is not possible to increase all fees and charges by this amount as they are set by statute. Accordingly, the actual increase in income shown in the projections is 50% of the general inflation assumption in each scenario.

6.12 The sensitivity of fees and charges income to overall economic factors varies across different income streams. Parking income is highly sensitive, and has been very severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Other sources of income, such as income from industrial property holdings, are more stable.

Contract costs

Costs are generally assumed to rise in line with inflation, but a composite rate is applied to take account of higher increases on contracts like waste collection where the growth in the number of households leads to a volume increase as well as an inflation increase. A relet of the waste contract in October 2023 is likely to lead to permanently higher contract costs.

6.13 Inflation assumptions are summarised as follows.

Table 5: Inflation Assumptions

	Favourable	Neutral	Adverse	Comments
General	2.00%	2.00%	3.00%	2% is the government's target inflation rate but in reality it is likely to be higher in the short term.

	Favourable	Neutral	Adverse	Comments
Employee Costs	1.00%	2.00%	3.00%	Neutral assumption is in line with the most recent pay settlement and government inflation targets
	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%	The annual cost of performance related incremental increases for staff
Contract costs	2.00% - 5.00%	2.00% - 5.00%	2.00% - 8.00%	A composite rate is applied, reflecting different pressures on individual contracts
Fees and charges - price	2.00%	2.00%	3.00%	In line with general inflation assumptions
Fees and charges - volume	2.00%	0.00%	-2.00%	Reflects overall economic conditions

The government has said that it will compensate public sector employers for the increase in employer national insurance announced earlier in 2021. However, this does not address pressures faced by employees from increased national insurance and higher prices. Pay structures will be reviewed to consider how best to mitigate these pressures within the overall spending envelope.

Service Spend

6.14 Strategic Revenue Projections under all scenarios will take account of savings previously agreed by Council, assuming that they are still deliverable. In addition, the following potential budget pressures have been identified and will be addressed by incorporating budget growth, subject to member agreement, as part of the budget setting process.

Communities and Housing

This service area supports the corporate priority 'Housing and Communities' and specifically the objective of delivering 1,000 new affordable homes. This may require a level of revenue subsidy, which would represent budget growth.

Environment & Public Realm

A provision of £1 million has been built into the Strategic Revenue Projections to recognise the likely increase in waste collection costs arising from the forthcoming contract relet in October 2023.

Heritage, Culture & Leisure

The Serco leisure contract comes to an end in 2024. Depending on the scope of any new contract, budget growth may be required. The objective of making Maidstone Town Centre a thriving place may also require budget growth, eg to provide leisure and cultural activities in the town centre.

Planning Services

In addition to core development management and spatial planning services, there is a requirement for more extensive planning policies and a Town Centre Strategy.

Corporate & Shared Services

Additional expenditure is likely to be required to support the new governance structure and to meet the Council's aspirations for better quality data analysis.

6.15 The projections include provision for the revenue cost of the capital programme, comprising interest costs (2%) and provision for repayment of borrowing (2%).

Summary of Projections

6.16 A summary of the financial projections under the neutral scenario is set out in section 7.

7. REVENUE PROJECTIONS

7.1 Strategic revenue projections have been prepared based on the assumptions set out above and are summarised in table 6 below for the 'neutral' scenario. Additional growth to accommodate new pressures described in the previous section, together with any offsetting savings, are still to be included in the projections.

7.2 In light of the many uncertainties around future funding, it is important to note that projections like these can only represent a 'best estimate' of what will happen.

Table 6: Strategic Revenue Projections 2022/23-2026/27

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Tax	18.2	18.8	19.5	20.2	20.9
Retained Business Rates	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.8
Business Rates Growth	1.2	-	0.2	0.4	0.5
Collection Fund adjustment	-0.2	-0.7	-	-	-
Budget requirement	22.7	21.7	23.3	24.3	25.2
Fees and Charges	21.9	23.3	24.5	24.9	25.4
Total Funding Available	44.6	45.0	47.8	49.2	50.6
Predicted Expenditure	43.8	47.0	48.6	49.7	50.7
Budget Surplus / (Gap)	0.8	-2.0	-0.8	-0.5	-0.1

7.3 The above table shows a modest surplus in 2022/23. However, the likely impact of a business rates reset and the cost of accommodating the costs of a new waste collection contract means that a deficit is projected in 2023/24. On current projections, this deficit will reduce over the remaining term of the MTFS to achieve a broadly balanced position in 2026/27. It should be noted, however, that at this stage these figures do not incorporate growth to reflect the new pressures described in the previous section. Proposals for the relevant budget changes will be considered by members at Service Committees in January 2022.

8. CAPITAL STRATEGY

8.1 The capital programme plays a vital part in delivering the Council's strategic plan, since long term investment plays an essential role in realising our ambitions for the borough. The cost of the capital programme is spread over the lifetime of investments, so does not have such an immediate impact on the revenue budget position. However, there are revenue consequences to the capital programme. Maidstone Borough Council borrowed to fund its capital programme for the first time in 2019/20. The cost of borrowing is factored into the 2021/22 budget, along with a Minimum Revenue Provision which spreads the cost of loan repayments over the lifetime of an asset. The budgeted total revenue costs of the capital programme in 2020/21 amounted to £1.870 million.

8.2 Typically, local authorities fund capital expenditure by borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board, which offers rates that are usually more competitive than those available in the commercial sector. Prior to 2019/20, Maidstone Borough Council had not borrowed to fund its capital programme, instead relying primarily on New Homes Bonus to fund the capital programme. The cost of any borrowing is factored into the MTFS financial projections.

8.3 Public Works Loan Board funding has for several years offered local authorities a cheap source of finance, which has been used more and more extensively. The government has revised the terms of PWLB borrowing to ensure that local authorities use it only to invest in housing, infrastructure and public services. Given the Council's capital strategy, this should not prevent us accessing PWLB borrowing.

8.4 There has been a reduction of the period for which New Homes Bonus would be paid from six years to five in 2017/18 and then to four in 2019/20 and 2020/21. The government paid New Homes Bonus on a one-year only basis in 2021/22 and is likely to do so again in 2022/23. Under any new Local Government funding regime a new, unspecified mechanism for incentivising housebuilding is envisaged.

8.5 External funding is sought wherever possible and the Council has been successful in obtaining Government Land Release Funding for its housing developments and ERDF funding for the Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre.

8.6 Funding is also available through developer contributions (S 106) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Community Infrastructure Levy was introduced in Maidstone in October 2018.

8.7 The current funding assumptions used in the programme are set out in the table below.

Table 7: Capital Programme Funding

	21/22 £000	22/23 £000	23/24 £000	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	Total £000
New Homes Bonus	3,995	1,373	1,373	1,373	1,373	9,487
Capital Grants	4,064	850	850	850	850	7,464
Internal Borrowing	3,114	336	803	1,080	1,050	6,383
External Borrowing	37,838	25,311	14,655	16,305	11,280	105,389
TOTAL	**49,011**	**27,870**	**17,681**	**19,608**	**14,553**	**128,723**

8.8 The use of New Homes Bonus to fund the capital programme arises from previous Council decisions. It could alternatively be used to fund revenue expenditure and therefore address relevant growth pressures, in particular the requirement for more extensive planning policies and a Town Centre Strategy (see paragraph 6.14 above). This would have the effect of increasing the revenue cost of funding the capital programme by £40,000 per annum for every £1 million of New Homes Bonus that was deployed in this way.

8.9 Under CIPFA's updated Prudential Code, the Council is now required to produce a Capital Strategy, which is intended to give an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services, along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The existing Capital Strategy was approved by Council at its meeting on 24th February 2020 and will be refreshed in February 2022.

8.10 The existing capital programme was approved by Council at its budget meeting on 24th February 2021. Major schemes include the following:

- Completion of Brunswick Street and Union Street developments
- Purchase of housing for temporary accommodation
- Flood Action Plan
- Mote Park Improvements
- Further investment at the Lockmeadow Leisure Complex
- Commercial Property Investments
- Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre
- Mall Bus Station Improvements
- Biodiversity and Climate Change.

8.11 A review of the schemes in the capital programme is currently under way. Proposals will be considered for new schemes to be added to the capital programme, whilst ensuring that the overall capital programme is sustainable and affordable in terms of its revenue costs.

8.12 In particular, the updated capital programme will reflect the Council's ambition to deliver 1,000 new affordable homes. As this implies a significant expansion of the existing capital programme, its overall affordability and the extent to which it exposes the Council to risk will be addressed in the Capital Strategy.

8.13 An updated capital programme will be considered by Policy and Resources Committee in January 2022 and recommended to Council for approval.

9. CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

9.1 Each year the Council carries out consultation as part of the development of the MTFS. A budget survey has been carried out and will be considered by Service Committees.

9.2 Consultation will be undertaken with the business community, including a presentation to the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership.

9.3 Consultation with members will take place in January 2022 on the detailed budget proposals. Individual Service Committees will consider the budget proposals relating to the services within their areas of responsibility.

Document History

Date	Description	Details of changes
11.11.21	Draft to Corporate Leadership Team	
16.11.21	Draft to Policy & Resources Committee	Changes requested by CLT

REVENUE ESTIMATE 2022/23 to 2026/27
STRATEGIC REVENUE PROJECTION - NEUTRAL SCENARIO

2021/22 £000		2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
17,216	COUNCIL TAX	18,204	18,845	19,508	20,195	20,906
3,430	RETAINED BUSINESS RATES	3,498	3,568	3,640	3,713	3,787
620	BUSINESS RATES GROWTH	1,164	0	180	362	546
-114	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT (COUNCIL TAX)	343	-164			
-13,243	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT (BUSINESS RATES)	-585	-585			
11,786	SECTION 31 GRANT					
19,695	**PROJECTED NET BUDGET**	**22,625**	**21,664**	**23,328**	**24,270**	**25,238**
21,924	OTHER INCOME	21,335	21,890	23,328	24,545	24,944
-3,186	FORECAST CHANGE IN INCOME	555	1,439	1,217	399	432
84	SALES FEES & CHARGES COMPENSATION					
38,517	**TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE**	**44,514**	**44,992**	**47,874**	**49,214**	**50,615**
42,996	CURRENT SPEND	41,058	43,990	46,378	47,766	49,173
	INFLATION & CONTRACT INCREASES					
850	PAY, NI & INFLATION INCREASES	1,274	1,186	1,205	1,244	1,285
	EXTERNAL BUDGET PRESSURES					
40	PENSION DEFICIT FUNDING	40	150	150	150	150
	LOCAL PRIORITIES					
-10	ADDITIONAL GROWTH AGREED BY P&R					
	OTHER SERVICE PRESSURES					
	PROVISION FOR MAJOR CONTRACTS		1,000			
221	REVENUE COSTS OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME	837	630	834	453	
-1,589	CONTINGENCY FOR FUTURE PRESSURES	500				
50	GENERAL GROWTH PROVISION	50	50	50	50	50
42,559	**TOTAL PREDICTED REQUIREMENT**	**43,759**	**47,007**	**48,617**	**49,663**	**50,658**
-4,042	**SURPLUS / (SAVINGS REQUIRED)**	**755**	**-2,014**	**-744**	**-449**	**-44**

BUDGET SURVEY

2022/2023

Undertaken Autumn 2021

ABSTRACT

The Budget Survey is undertaken on an annual basis to assist in the identification of spending priorities for the Council.

Report prepared by Corporate Insight, Communities and Governance Team

Contents

Introduction

Maidstone Council are committed to providing high quality and good value services to meet the needs of the local community.

Reductions in central government funding and the coronavirus pandemic have had a major impact on the Council's finances and will continue to do so. Looking further ahead, the financial outlook for Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is uncertain, given the lasting impact of the pandemic and lack of information about the level of central government support in the future.

As part of that process, the Council sought to understand residents' views on where they think savings should be made and what the Council's priorities for spending should be.

Methodology

The survey was open between 17 September and 31 October 2021. It was promoted online through the Council's website and its social media channels. Residents who signed up for consultation reminders were notified and sent an invitation to participate in the consultation. A reminder email was also sent to this group.

As an online survey is a self-selection methodology, residents are free to choose whether to participate or not. It was anticipated that returned responses would not necessarily be fully representative of the wider adult population. As a result, this report discusses the weighted results to overall responses, by demographic questions, to ensure that it more accurately matches the known profile of Maidstone Boroughs population by these characteristics.

The results have been weighted by age and gender based on the population in the ONS mid-year population estimates 2020. However, the under-representation of 18 to 34 year olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group. Results for this group should be treated with caution. It should also be noted that respondents from BME backgrounds are under-represented at 4.9% compared to 5.9% in the local area. The results for this group should also be treated with caution.

There were a total of 1073 responses to the survey, after weighting this reduced to 1041. Based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years and over, the overall results are accurate to ±2.54% at the 90% confidence level. This means if we repeated the same survey ,100 times, 90 times out of 100 the results would be between ±2.54% of the calculated response. Therefore the 'true' response could be 2.54% above or below the figures reported (i.e., a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 47.46% to 52.54%).

Please note that not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.

The data has been z-tested at the 95% confidence level. The z-test is a statistical test which determines if the percentage difference between subgroups is large enough to be statistically significant or whether the difference is likely to have occurred by chance. An equivalent test, known as a t-test has been used to assess differences in mean scores.

Rounding means that some charts may not add up to 100%.

Findings

- Half of all respondents (50.9%) said that the Council should increase spending for Environmental Enforcement.

- Six in ten respondents (60.3%) said that the Council should reduce spending on Planning.

- Parks and Open Spaces had the second greatest proportion responding, ‘spend more’ and was ranked the second most important investment priority for the third year running. It was also ranked the third ‘most important’ service.

- Just under a quarter of respondents said there should be a Council Tax increase. The proportion responding ‘no’, there should not be an increase in Council Tax has increased from 60.8% in the 2021/22 Survey (undertaken Autumn 2020) to 66.0% (±2.9%) for this year.

- A greater proportion of respondents said there should be a Council Tax increase when presented with options for incremental increase. 42.8% (±3.0%) indicated that Council Tax should be raised by selecting a percentage increase compared to 24.6% (±2.6%) when directly asked if Council Tax should increase.

- The proportion responding ‘no increase’ when asked about specific proportional increases in Council Tax has increased by 9.7 percentage points since the 2020/21 survey (undertaken in Autumn 2019).

- The top three investment priorities remain in the same order as in the 2021/22 Budget survey:

    1. Infrastructure
    2. Parks & Open Spaces
    3. Leisure & Culture

- Respondents selected Waste Collection Services, Street Cleaning and Parks & Open Spaces as the most important services. Parks and Open Spaces also featured as the second area with the greatest proportion saying ‘spend more’ when asked about spending approaches.

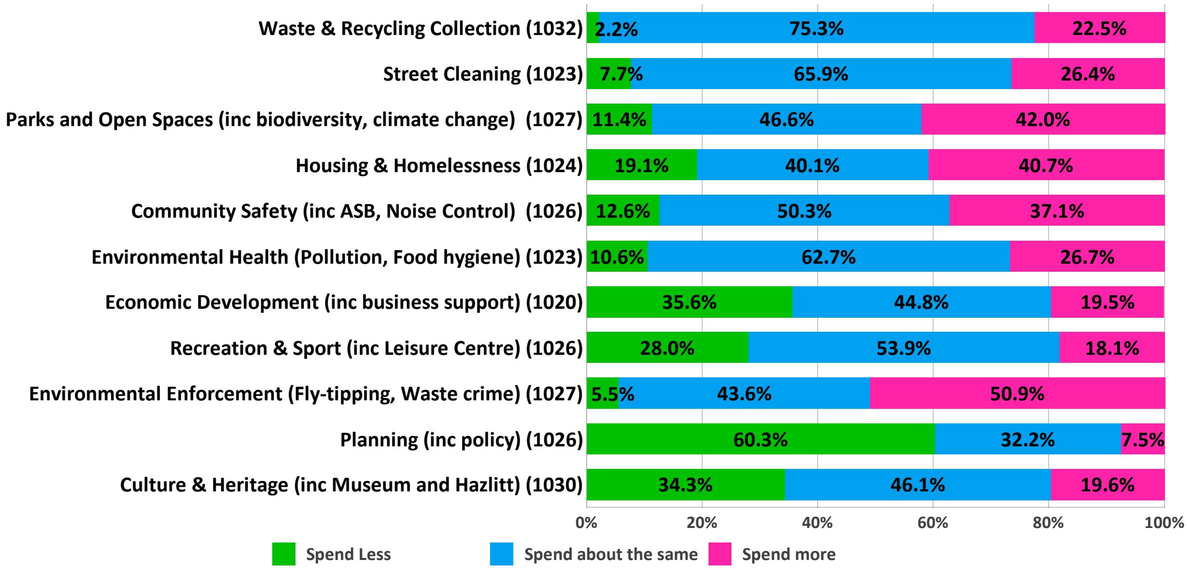
- The most common comment about the Budget and the Council’s spending approaches was in relation to financial concerns. Respondents raised concerns about affording increases in Council Tax, increases in the cost of living and decreases in income.

- Since 2018, when the 2019/20 survey was undertaken, the proportion agreeing that Maidstone Council provides value for money has declined year on year. In this time, it has dropped 5.3 percentage points to the current figure of 28.1% (±2.7%).

- Half of respondents said they were ‘satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live (51.0% (±3.2%)), half said they were proud of Maidstone (50.4% (±3.0%)) and just over a quarter of respondents agreed that Maidstone was a place where everyone can realise their potential (27.8% (±2.7%)).

Spending Priorities

Survey respondents were provided with a list of services provided by Maidstone Borough Council. They were asked to indicate what approach they thought MBC should take to funding with three answer options: ‘spend Less’, ‘spend about the same’ and ‘spend more’.



The top three areas where respondents said ‘spend more’ were:

1. Environmental Enforcement
2. Parks & Open Spaces
3. Housing & Homelessness

The top three areas where respondents answered ‘spend less’ were:

1. Planning
2. Economic Development
3. Culture & Heritage

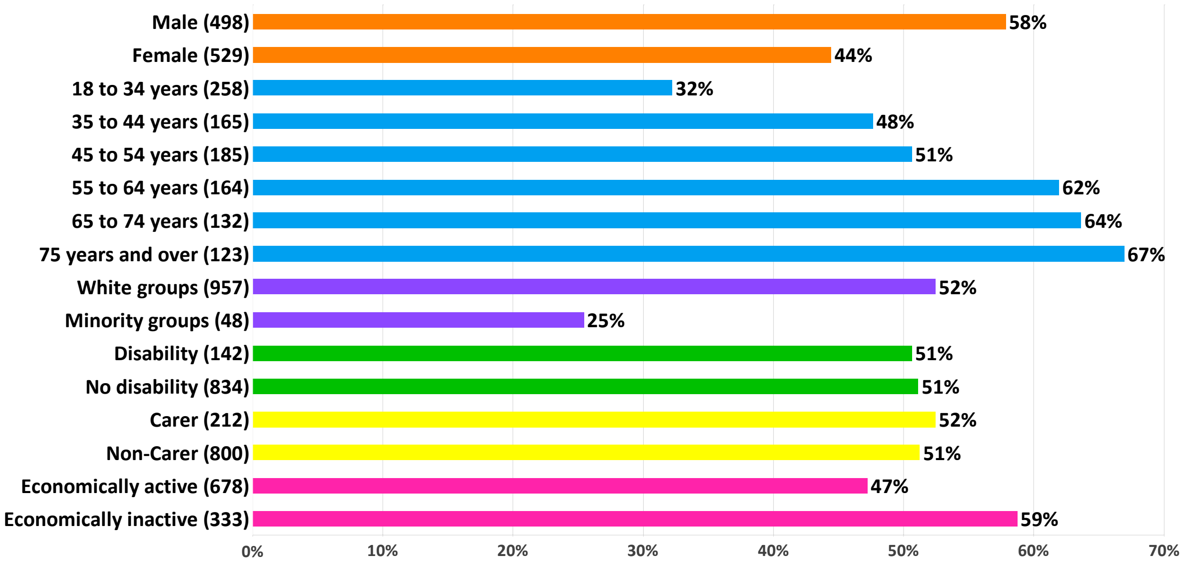
These spending areas are explored in more detail below.

Top Three Areas – Spend More

Environmental Enforcement

A total of 1,027 respondents indicated a spending approach to Environmental Enforcement. The most common response was ‘spend more’ with 523 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding ‘spend more’ across the different demographic groups and the table that follows highlights any differences in response.

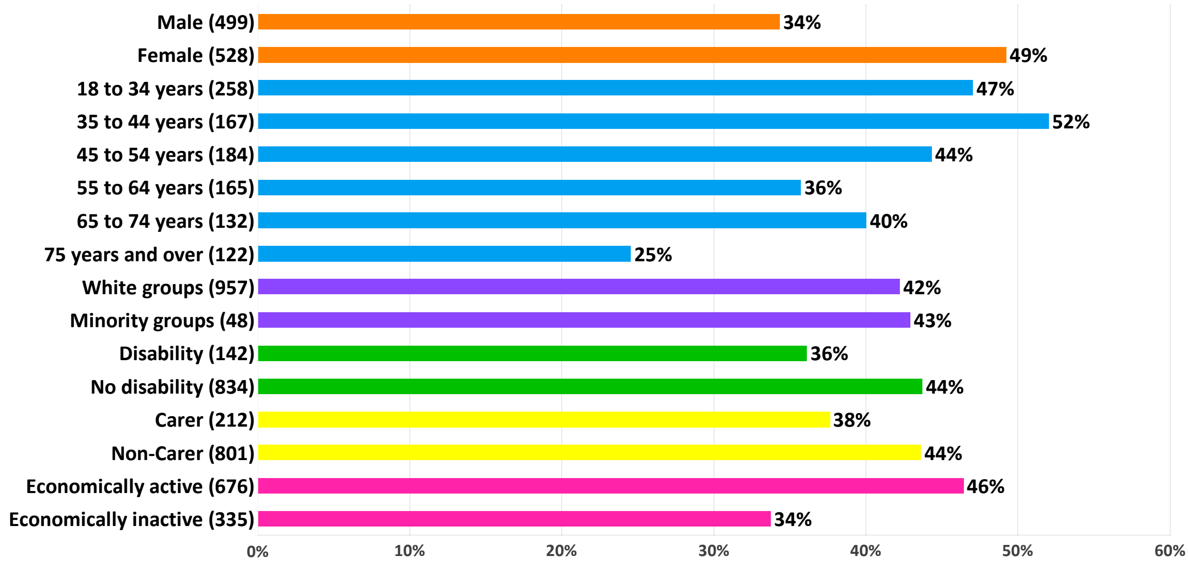


	While there was no significant difference between the proportion of male and female responders answering ‘spend less’, male respondents were significantly more likely to respond ‘spend more’ on Environmental Enforcement than female respondents. The most common answer for female responders was ‘spend about the same’.
	The data shows that the proportion responding ‘spend more’ on Environmental Enforcement increases as age increases and is significantly lower for the 18 to 34 age group when compared to the other age groups. The most common response for those aged 18-34 was ‘spend about the same’, whereas the most common response for the other age groups was ‘spend more’.
	There was no significant difference in the proportion of respondents from white groups and those from minority groups answering ‘spend less’. Minority group respondents were significantly more likely to respond ‘spend about the same’ with 67.1% (±13.2%) answering this way compared to 42.2% (±3.1%) answering the same from white groups.
	Economically inactive respondents had a greater proportion responding, ‘spend about the same’ than economically inactive respondents and a lower proportion answering ‘spend more’. These differences are significant however the gap is smaller than for other differences assessed between demographic groups.

Parks & Open Spaces

A total of 1,027 respondents indicated a spending approach to Parks & Open Spaces. The most common response was ‘spend about the same’ with 479 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding ‘spend more’ across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.

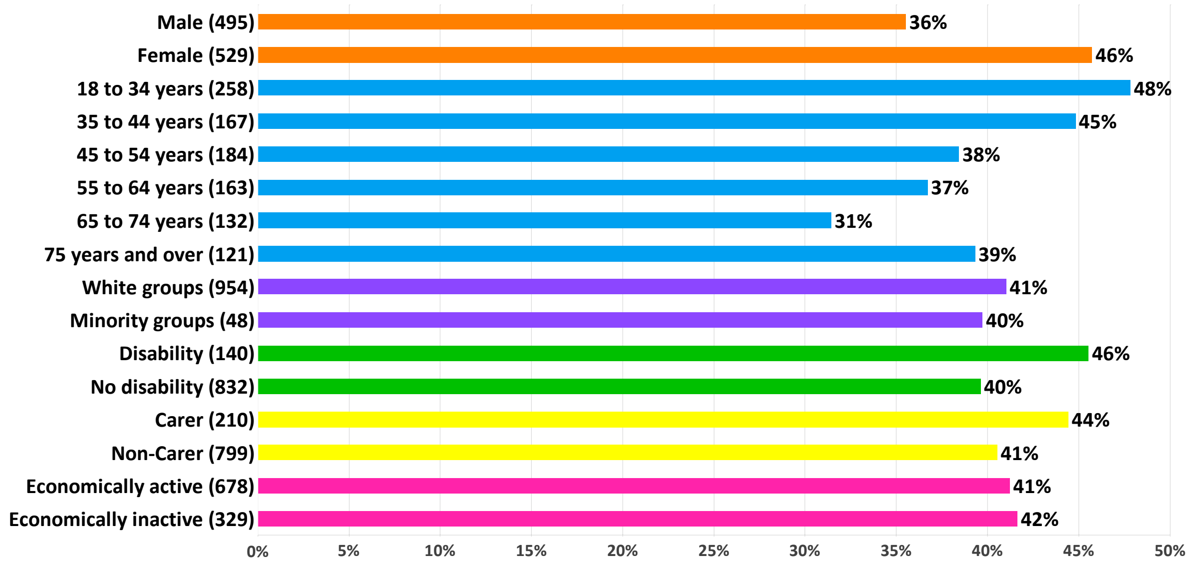


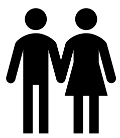
	There were significant differences in the proportions of male and female respondents selecting each answer option. The greatest difference was between the proportions responding ‘spend more’ with 34.3% (±4.2%) of male respondents answered this way, compared to 49.2% (±4.3%) of female respondents.
	There was variation across the age groups in the proportions answering ‘spend less’, but no trend was identified. The 75 years and over group had a significantly lower proportion responding ‘spend more’ compared to the other age groups. The 75 years and over group and the 55 to 64 age group had the greatest proportions responding ‘spend more’ at 15.0% (±6.3%) and 15.6% (±5.5%) respectively. The 35 to 44 years had the lowest proportion answering ‘spend less’ at 8.1% (±4.1%).
	There was a significant difference in the proportion responding ‘spend less’ between respondents that are carers and those that are not. 15.4% (±4.9%) of carers said there should be less spending on Parks & Open Spaces compared to 9.2% (±2.0%) of non-carers answering the same.
	Comparable proportions of economically active and economically inactive respondents answered ‘spend less’. The most common response for economically inactive respondents was ‘spend about the same’ at 53.6% (±5.3%). This was significantly greater than the proportion of economically active respondents answering this way at 43.1% (±3.7%).

Housing & Homelessness

A total of 1024 respondents indicated a spending approach to Housing & Homelessness. The most common response was ‘spend more’ with 417 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding ‘spend more’ across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.



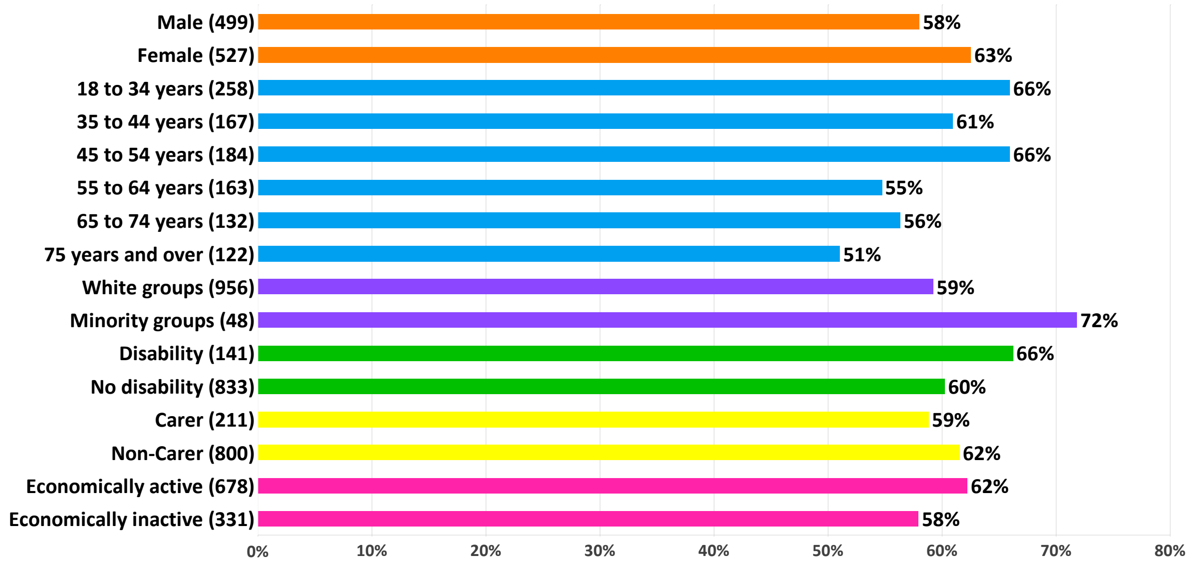
	There are significant differences between how male and female respondents have answered this question. The most common response for male respondents was ‘spend about the same’ at 37.2% (±4.3%), and for female respondents it was ‘spend more’ with 45.7% (±4.2%) answering this way. The biggest difference between these groups was for the answer ‘spend less’, with 27.3% (±2.9%) of male respondents answering this way compared to 11.5% (±2.7%) of female respondents.
	There was no significant difference across the age groups in the proportions responding ‘spend less’. The 65 to 74 years group had the lowest proportion responding, ‘spend more’ (31.4% (±7.9%) and the greatest proportion responding ‘spend about the same’ significantly different from the proportions responding the same for the 18 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 year age groups.
	Non-carers had a significantly greater proportion responding ‘spend less’ on Housing & Homelessness with 19.6% (±2.8%) answering this way compared to 13.5% (±4.6%) of carers.

Top Three Areas – Spend Less

Planning

A total of 1026 respondents indicated a spending approach to Planning. The most common response was ‘spend less’ with 618 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding ‘spend less’ across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.

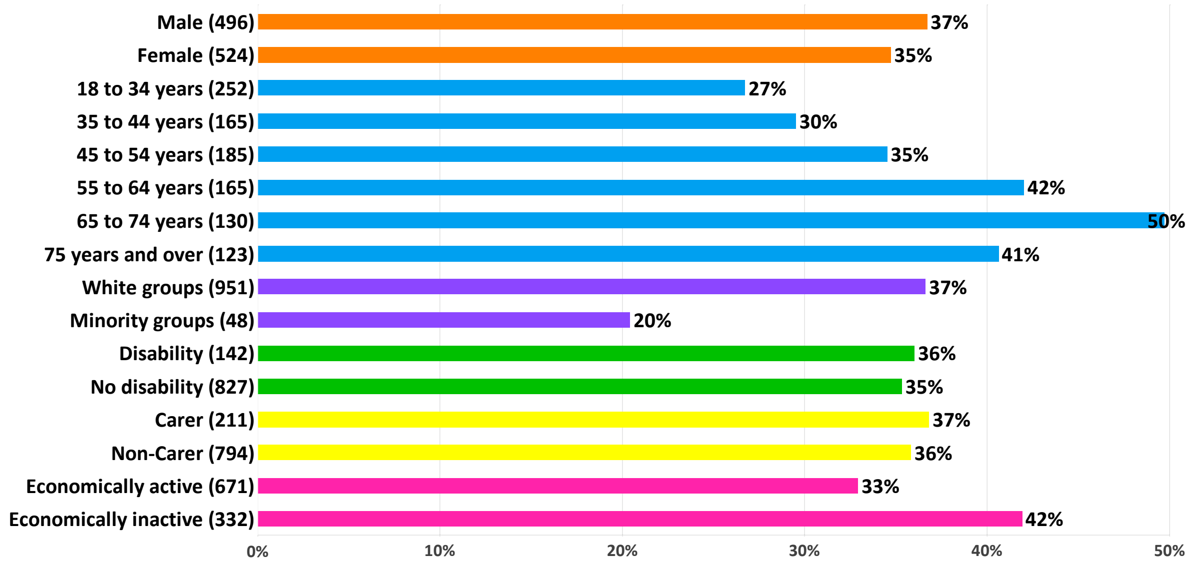


	Comparable proportions of male and female respondents answered, 'spend less' and 'spend about the same' when asked about spending approaches for Planning. 'Spend about the same was the most common response for both sexes. 10.3% (2.7%) of Male respondents answered, 'spend more', compared to 4.9% (±1.8%) of females answering the same – this difference is significant.
	'Spend less' was the most common response across all age groups. The 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportion responding 'spend more' at 11.2% (±3.8%), the 64 to 74 years and 75 years and over age groups had the lowest proportions responding 'spend more' at 4.8% (±3.8%).
	Respondents with a disability had a lower proportion responding 'spend more' than non-disabled respondents when asked about Planning. 3.4% (±3.0%) of disabled respondents answered this way compared to 8.3% (±1.9%) of non-disabled respondents.
	Economically inactive respondents had a greater proportion responding 'spending less' than economically active respondents at 36.9% (±5.2%) compared to 29.0% (±3.4%) respectively. Economically active respondents had a greater proportion responding 'spend more' at 8.7% (±2.1%) compared to economically inactive respondents with 5.2% (±2.4%) answering this way.

Economic Development

A total of 1,020 respondents indicated a spending approach to Economic Development. The most common response was 'spend about the same' with 457 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend less' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.

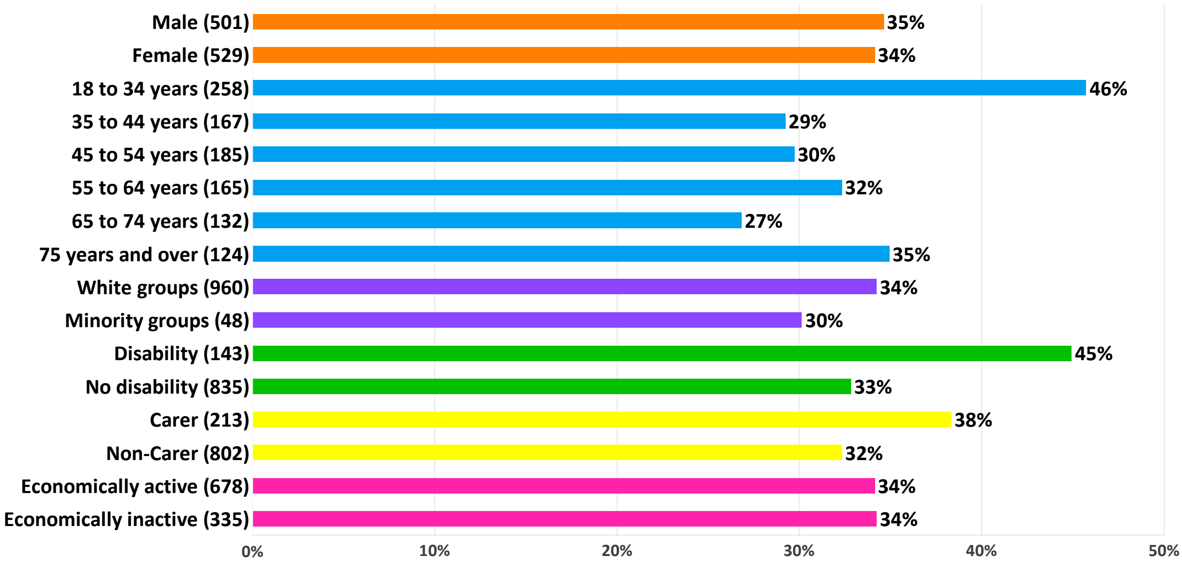


	The most common response for the 64 to 74 years and the 75 years and over age groups was 'spend less'. For all other age groups the most common response was 'spend about the same'. The 18 to 34 age group had the greatest proportion responding 'spend more' at 24.3% (±5.3%). The 64 to 74 age group had the lowest proportion responding this way at 15.1% (±6.2%) – this difference is significant.
	A significantly greater proportion of respondents from white groups answered 'spend less' than respondents from minority groups. 36.6% (±3.1%) of white groups answered this way compared to 20.4% (±11.3%) of minority groups. No other significant differences were observed.
	A significantly greater proportion of economically inactive respondents answered 'spend less' than economically active respondents. 41.9% (±5.3%) of the economically inactive group answered this way compared to 32.9% (±3.6%) of the economically active group. No other significant differences were observed.

Culture & Heritage

A total of 1,028 respondents indicated a spending approach to Culture & Heritage. The most common response was 'spend about the same' with 475 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend less' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.



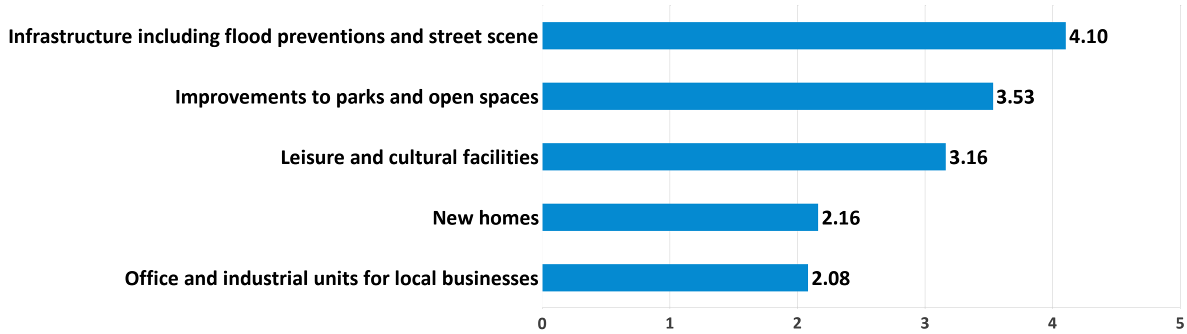
	The most common answer for the 18-34 years group was 'spend less' with 45.7% (±6.1%) answering this way. This was significantly greater than the proportion responding this way across the other age groups. The most common response for the remaining age groups was 'spend about the same'. The 35 to 45 years group had the greatest proportion responding 'spend more' at 24.4% (±6.5%). The 55 to 64 years and the 75 years and over groups had the lowest proportions responding this way at 14.1% - the difference here is significant.
	The most common answer for disabled respondents was 'spend less' with 44.9% (±8.1%) answering this way. This was significantly greater than the proportion responding this way for non-disabled respondents. The most common answer for non-disabled respondents was 'spend about the same. Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion answering 'spend more' with 20.8% (±2.8%) answering this way compared to 12.5% (±5.4%) of disabled respondents.
	The proportion of carers and non-carers answering 'spend less' were comparable. Non-carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering 'spend more' on Heritage and Culture with 21.1% (±2.8%) answering this way compared to 14.6% (±4.7%) of carer respondents.
	The proportions responding, 'spend about the same' and 'spend more' for economically active and economically inactive respondents show significant differences. 22.6% (±3.1%) of economically active respondents said 'spend more' compared to 14.4% (±3.8%) of economically inactive respondents.

Investment Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to place a list of investment programme priorities into their preferred order of importance. A total of 1,016 respondents ranked the investment priorities.

To assess this data, a weighted average has been used. The programmes placed first received 5 points and the programmes ranked last were given 1 point. These were then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.

Please note that not every respondent ranked each item.



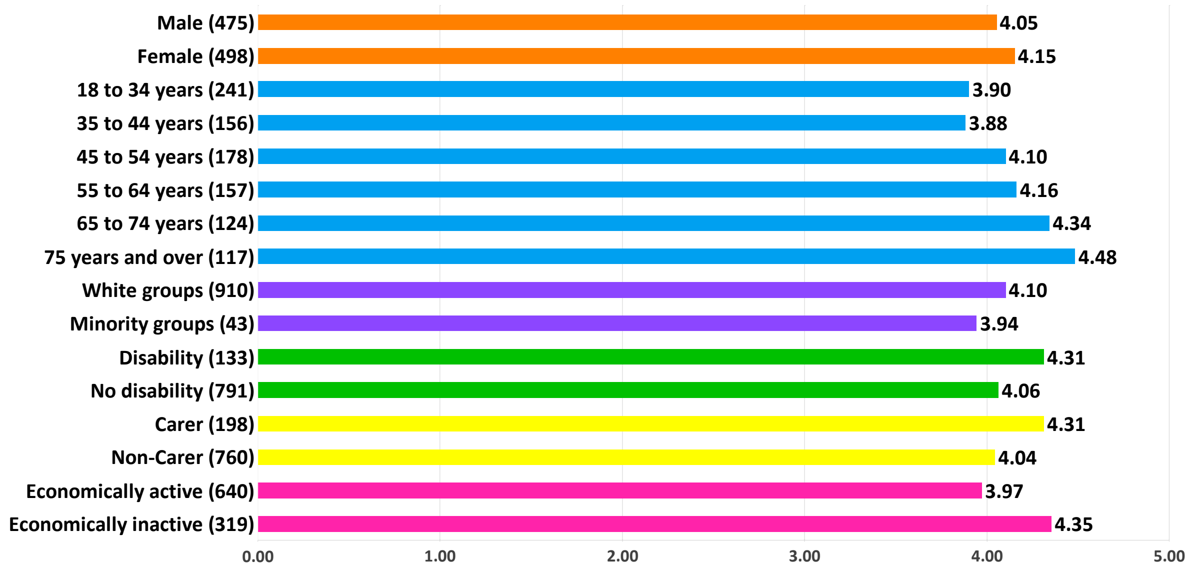
This question was asked in the 2021/22 Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2020. The order of the top three programmes is unchanged. New Homes was ranked as fifth in 2021/22 but this year it has moved up a place to fourth and Office and industrial units for local businesses has dropped from fourth to fifth.

Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene

Overall, 510 (52.4%) respondents placed 'Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene' as their top investment priority

In the 2021/22 Budget Survey, 467 (53.2%) respondents placed 'Infrastructure including flood preventions and street scene' as their top investment priority and in the 2020/21 Budget survey 52.2% placed this priority as first.

The following chart shows the mean score across the demographic groups for the priority 'Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene'.



Analysis suggests a relationship between age and ranking of this priority with the proportion placing this priority first and second increasing with age. The scores for the 18 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years groups are significantly different than the scores for the 65 to 74 years and the 75 years and over group.

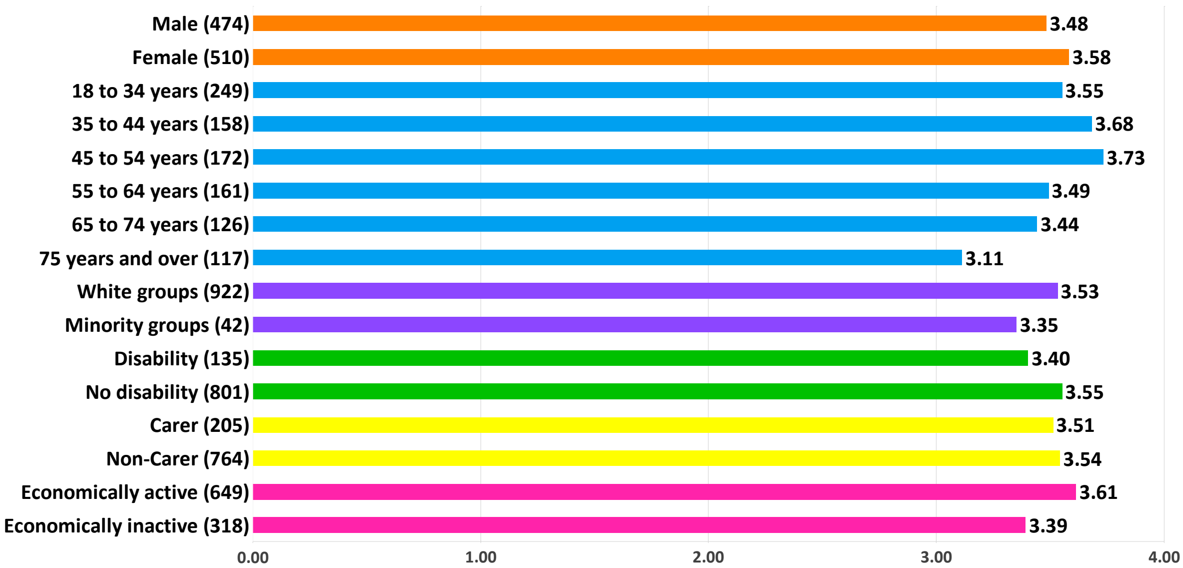
	The difference in score between carer and non-carer respondents is significant. 61.0% (±6.8%) of carers placed this priority as first compared to 50.7% (±3.6%) of non-carers.
	The difference in score between economically active and economically inactive respondents is significant. 61.9% (±5.3%) of economically inactive respondents placed this priority first compared to 47.6% (±3.9 %) of economically active respondents. 13.6% (±2.7%) of economically active respondents placed this priority as fourth or fifth, significantly greater than the proportion responding the same from the economically inactive group (6.0% (±2.6%)).

Improvements to parks & open spaces

Overall, 212 (21.6%) respondents placed 'improvements to parks and open spaces' as their top investment priority

In the 2021/22 Budget Survey, 203 (22.9%) respondents placed 'Improvements to parks and open spaces' as their top investment priority.

The following chart shows the mean score across the demographic groups for the priority 'improvements to parks and open spaces'.



	The score for respondents aged 75 years and over is significantly lower than the scores for the age groups up to 64 years. 33.9% (±8.5%) of the 75 years and over age group placed this priority as fourth or fifth. The 35 to 44 age group had the greatest proportion placing this priority as first at 29.9% (±7.1%) while the 45 to 54 age group had the lowest proportion placing this in fourth or fifth at 12.2% (±4.9%).
	The difference in score between economically active and economically inactive respondents is significant. 24.8% (±3.3%) of the economically active placed this priority first compared to 15.1% (±3.9%) of economically inactive respondents.

Council Tax Changes

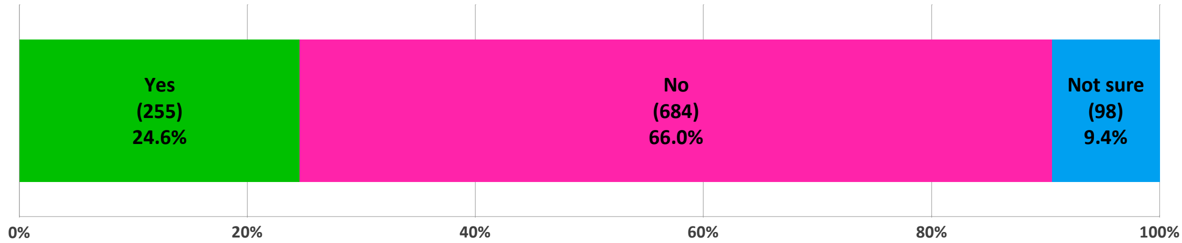
Appetite for increase

The survey explained that the council funds a significant proportion of its spending through council tax, and that Maidstone's share of Council Tax for a Band D taxpayer is £270.90 out of a total of £1,988.63, the rest being made up of charges from Kent County Council, the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service.

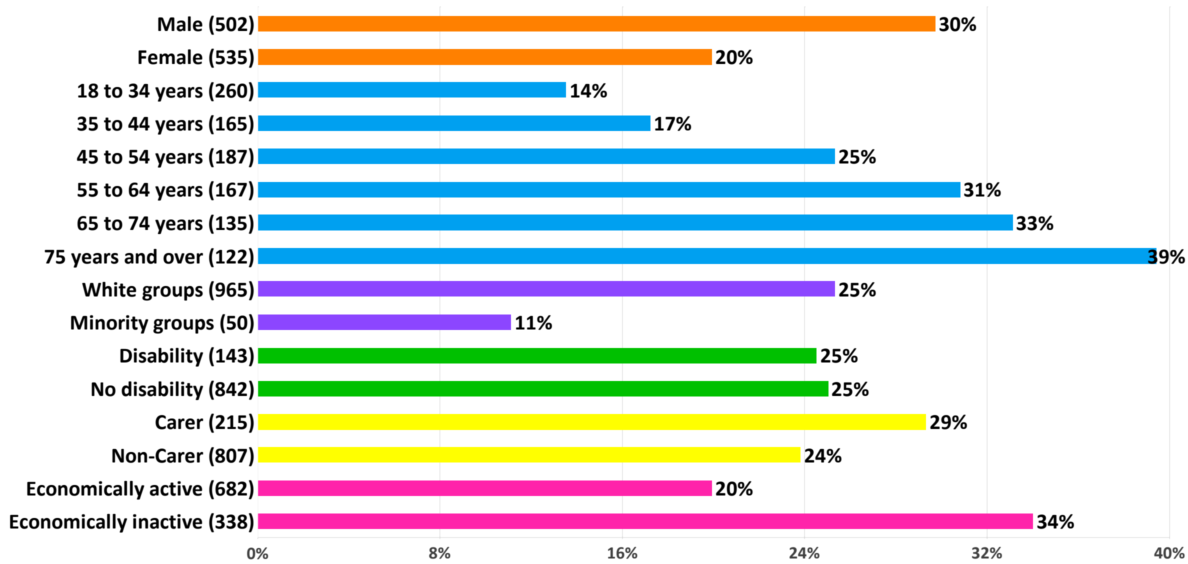
The survey asked respondents if they thought that Council Tax for 2022/23 should be increased. There were 1,037 responses to this question.

The most common response was 'no' with 684 responding this way. 24.6% (±2.6%) of respondents said that Council Tax should increase. This question was asked in the 2021/22 Budget Consultation where 28.4% (±2.8%) responded 'Yes'.

The proportion responding 'No' has increased from 60.8% in the 2021/22 Survey to 66.0% (±2.9%) for this year.



The chart below shows the proportion of respondents across the different demographic groups responding 'yes'. Differences in response between demographic groups are explored in the table below.



	Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering ‘yes’ at 29.7% (±4.0%) compared to female respondents where 19.9% (±3.4%) answered this way). Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding ‘not sure’ compared to male respondents. The same differences were observed in the 2021/22 Budget Survey.
	Analysis shows that there is a liner relationship between this question and age. The proportions responding ‘no’ decreases with age and the proportion responding ‘yes’ increases with age. The same pattern was observed in the 2021/22 Budget Survey.
	Respondents from white groups had a significantly greater proportion answering ‘yes’ at 25.3% (±2.7%) compared to respondents from minority groups where 11.1% (±8.7%) answered this way. No other significant differences between these groups were observed and the previous Budget Survey (2021/22) did not show any significant difference between these groups.
	Non-carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering ‘No’ with 68.0% (±3.2%) responding this way compared to 56.1% (±6.6%) of carer respondents. Carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding ‘not sure’ compared to non-carers at 14.6% (±4.7%) compared to 8.1% (±1.8%).
	There were significant differences between the proportions of Economically active and Economically inactive respondents answering both positively and negatively. 73.4% (±3.3%) of Economically active respondents answered ‘No’ compared to 50.6% (±5.3%) of Economically inactive respondents.

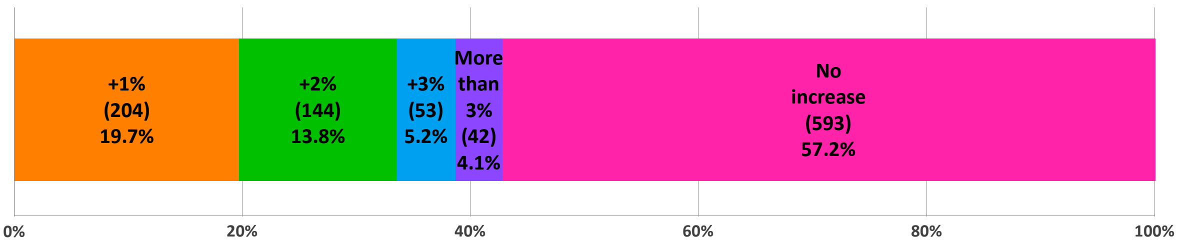
Acceptable levels for increase

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how much more, if any, Council Tax they would be willing to pay. There were 1,037 responses to this question.

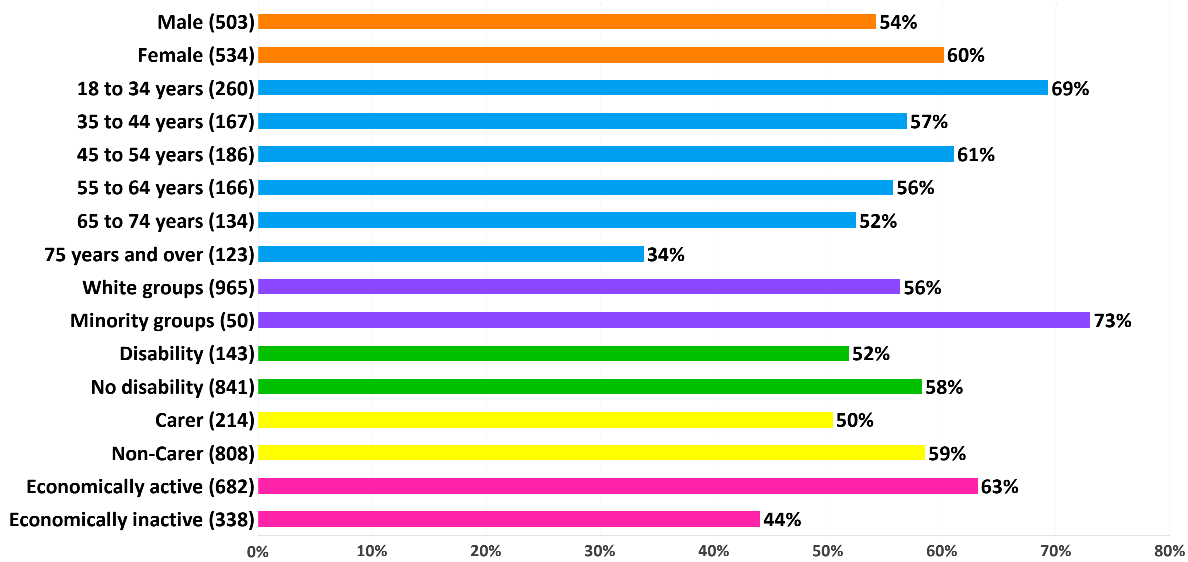
The most common response was ‘no increase’ with 57.2% (±3.0%) answering this way. Overall, 42.8% (±3.0%) indicated that Council Tax should be raised by selecting a percentage increase.

This is significantly greater than the proportion responding ‘yes’ to the previous, more general question.

The proportion responding ‘no increase’ has increased by 9.7 percentage points since 2019 when this question was asked as part of the 2019/20 Budget Survey and again in the 2020/21 Budget Survey, increasing from 47.5% to 57.2%.



The chart below shows the proportion responding ‘no increase’ across the different demographic groups. Differences in response between demographic groups are explored in the table below.



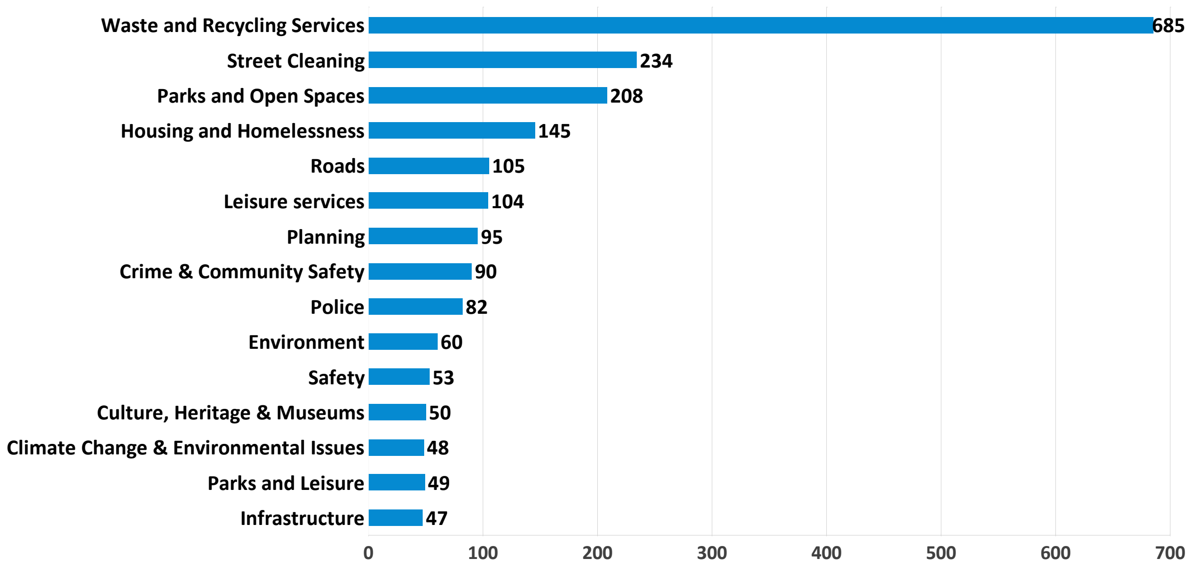
	Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding 1% increase with 25.0% (±3.7%) selecting this response compared to male respondents with 14.1% (±3.0%) answered this way. Male respondents had greater proportions selecting an increase over 1% compared to female respondents.
	Respondents aged 75 years and over had a significantly lower proportion responding ‘no increase’ compared to the other age groups. This group also had a significantly greater proportion in favour of an increase of up to 2%, at 49.3% (±8.8%) compared to the other age groups.
	Respondents from minority groups had a significantly greater proportion responding ‘no increase’ compared to those from white groups. 43.7% (±3.1%) of white group respondents selected an increase amount compared to 27.0% (±12.4%) of respondents from minority groups.
	Carers had a greater proportion selecting a 1% increase and a lower proportion selecting ‘no increase’ compared to non-carer respondents. 24.9% (±5.8%) of carers selected a 1% increase in Council Tax compared to 18.5% (±2.7%) of non-Carers.
	Economically inactive respondents had the lowest proportion responding ‘no increase’ with 44.0% (±5.3%) answering this way compared to 63.1% (±3.6%) economically active respondents. The economically inactive group had greater proportions for all the incremental council tax increase options listed.

Important Services

Survey respondents were asked what three services were most important to them and provided with three open text boxes to provide a response. The answers have been cleansed so that counts can be obtained (e.g., ‘street cleansing’, ‘clean streets’, ‘cleanliness’ and ‘clean and tidy’ and such terms were all amended to ‘street cleaning’. However, ‘Street maintenance’ would not be included in the street cleaning category as it is unclear if the respondent is referring to the fabric of streets such as condition of the pavement or the cleanliness of the street).

A total of 935 respondents answered this question. Please note that not all respondents that answered this question gave three services. The word cloud below shows the top 50 responses where three or more respondents have said the same thing.

The top 15 services are shown below.



In the 2021/22 Budget Survey, the top three most important services were: Waste Collection, Parks & Open Spaces and Roads & Highways.

Comments

Respondents to the survey were given the opportunity to make additional comments about the Council's budget and the funding of services. A total of 385 comments were received. These comments have been grouped into themes, with some comments containing multiple themes. The table below shows a summary of the comments for each of the top ten themes identified.

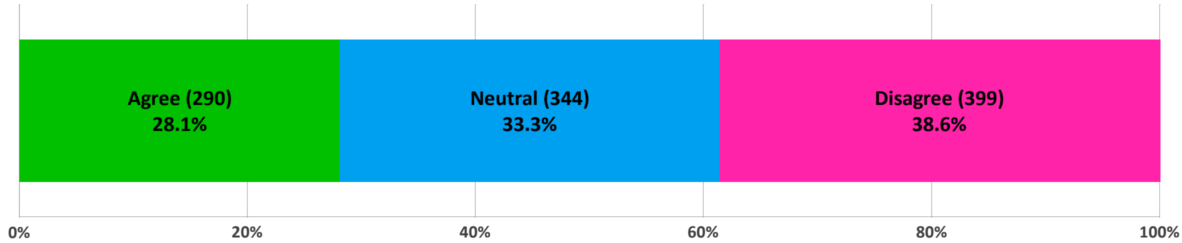
Theme	No. Comments	Summary
Finance Concerns/CT increase too high	82	• Requests for no more increases. • Wages not increasing at same rate. • People on fixed incomes. • Would not be able to afford an increase. • Council tax is too expensive.
Council/Budget Management	62	• Spend money more wisely. • Don't spend money on 'vanity' projects. • Better contracts for services. • Do more for less.
No improvements/ Not VFM	60	• Delivery of services not up to standard (empty shops, street cleaning). • Do not feel there is value for money from the amount of Council Tax paid (rural locations and suspension of services mentioned)
New Homes/ Growth/ Infrastructure	51	• Queried why CT needs to increase since there should be more revenue received from new housing. • Stop building new homes. • No infrastructure improvements to support growth.
Council Salaries	38	• Cut staff salaries. • Cut Members Allowances. • Reduce management.
Priorities	35	• Climate change & environmental issues should feature. • Improve town centre. • Localise improvements.
Accepting of CT increases	23	• Good services cost money. • Increase in line with inflation. • All living costs going up.
KCC Services	16	• Charges for tip use. • Condition of roads. • Support Social Services.
Income Comment /Suggestion	15	• Try crowd funding. • Increase charges for planning and licensing. • Increase revenue streams from enforcement activity and business development. • Partnership run services.
Provide essential/statutory services only	12	• Get essentials right first. • Find savings from non-essential services. • Stop all non-essential spending.

Resident feelings

Value for Money

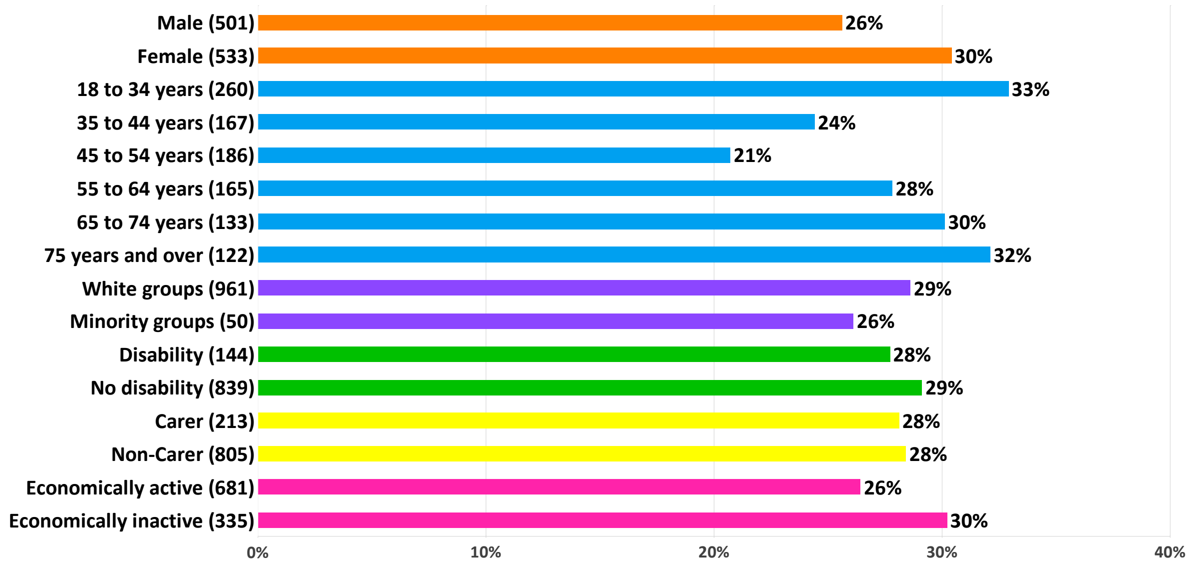
Survey respondents were asked to 'what extent do you agree or disagree that Maidstone Borough Council provides value for money'. There was a total of 1033 responses.

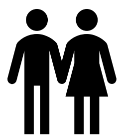
The most common response was 'neither agree nor disagree' with 344 responding this way. Overall, 28.1% (±2.7%).



This question has been asked in previous Budget surveys. In the 2021/22 survey 29.3% (±2.8%) of respondents agreed that Maidstone Borough Council provided value for money. In the 2020/21 survey 33.2% of residents agreed with this question and in the 2019/20 Budget Survey 33.4% agreed.

The chart below shows the proportions responding positively (strongly agree and agree combined).



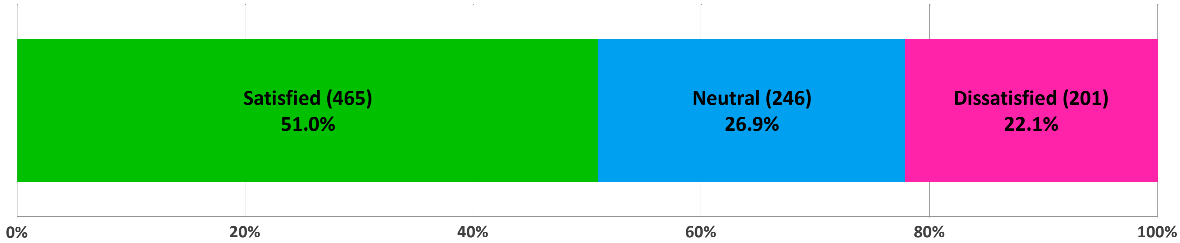
	The overall proportions answering positively are not significantly different between gender. However, female respondents had a significantly greater proportion that responded, 'strongly agree'. Male respondents had a greater proportion responding neutrally at 36.8% (±4.2%) compared to 30.0% (3.9± %) of females.
	The 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportions responding both positively and negatively. The data suggests that there is a liner relation between a negative response to this question, as age increases, the proportions responding negatively decreases.

The overall proportions answering positively are not significantly different between economically active and economically inactive respondents. However, a significantly greater proportion of economically active respondents answered negatively with 43.8% (±3.7%) answering this way compared to 28.6% (±4.8%) of economically inactive respondents.

Local area Satisfaction

Survey respondents were asked: 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?' and given a five-point scale from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied'. There was a total of 912 respondents.

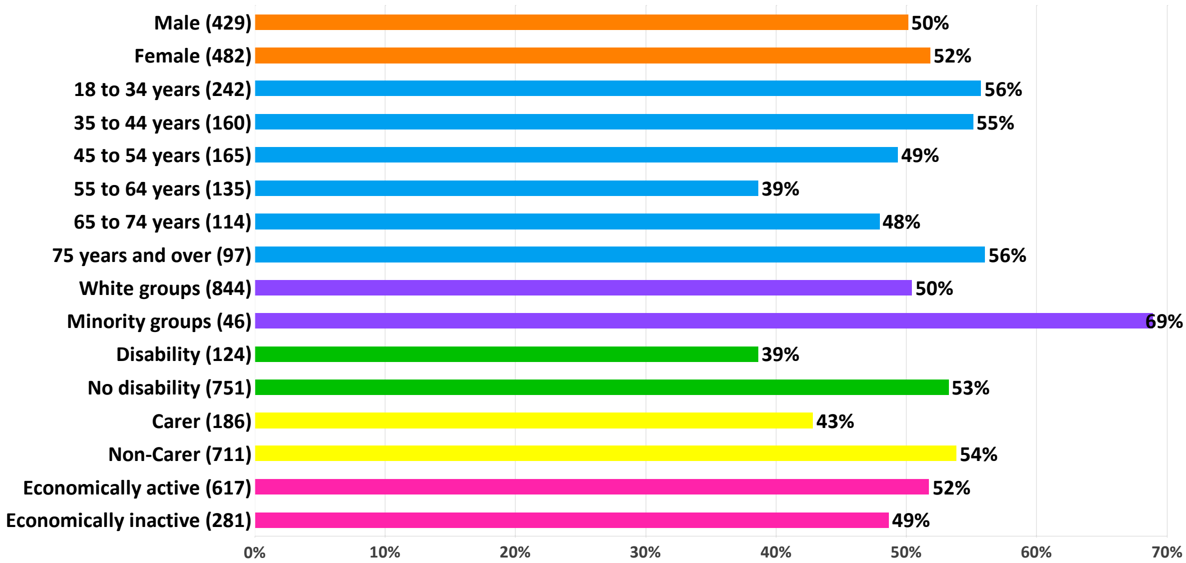
The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 394 answering this way. Overall, just over half of respondents said they were 'satisfied' with their local area as a place to live (51.0% (±3.2%).



This question was last asked in the 2021/22 Budget Survey. At this time 52.2% said they were 'satisfied' and in the 2020/21 survey 53.1% were 'satisfied'.

Last year there had been a reduction in the proportion responding negatively from 28.9% in 2020/21 to 19.9% for 2021/22. This year there was a 2.2 percentage point increase in the proportion answering this way (22.1% (±2.7%)).

The chart below shows the proportion responding 'satisfied' across the demographic groups.

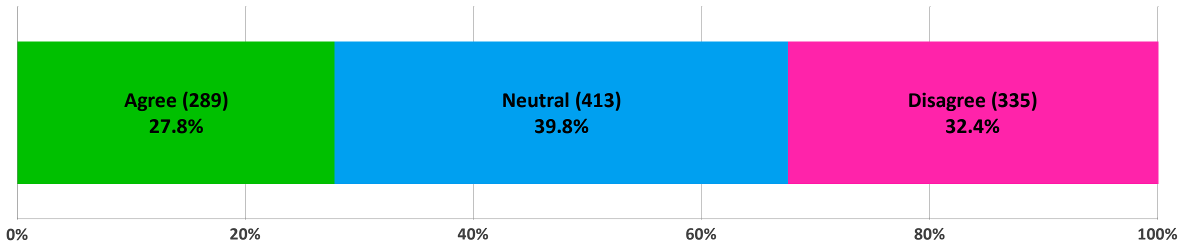


	Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 25.0% (±4.1%) answering this way compared to 19.5% (±3.5%) of female respondents.
	The proportions responding positively from the 18 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 age groups were significantly greater than the proportion answering the same from the 55 to 64 age group. The 55 to 64 age group had the greatest proportion responding negatively at 27.3% (±7.5%). In the 2021/22 Budget Survey the 55 to 64 age group also had the lowest proportion answering negatively.
	Minority group respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding positively with 68.9% (±13.4%) answering this way compared to 50.4% (±3.4%) of respondents from white groups
	Disabled respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 29.7% (±8.0%) answering this way compared to 20.9% (±2.9%) of non-disabled respondents answering the same.
	Non-carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding to this question positively and significantly less responding negatively when compared to carer respondents. 27.6% (±6.4%) of carer respondents answered negatively compared to 19.4% (±2.9%) of non-carer respondents.

Realising Potential

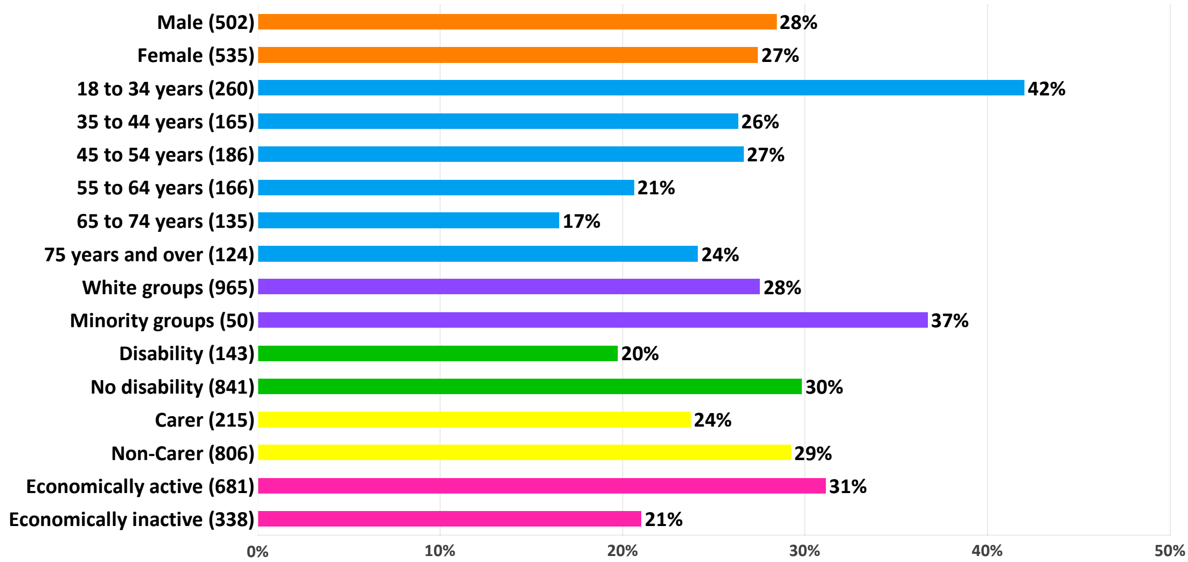
The survey asked respondents: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that Maidstone is a place where everyone can realise their potential?'. A total of 1,037 people responded to this question.

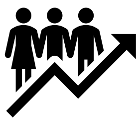
Overall, 27.8% (±2.7%) of respondents said that they agreed that Maidstone was a place where everyone can realise their potential. The most common response was 'neither agree nor disagree' with 39.8% (±3.0%) responding this way.



Since the 2021/22 Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2020, the proportion of those responding negatively has increased by two percentage points (2021/22 Survey, 30.4%). The proportion responding positively has increased marginally by 0.7 percentage points (2021/22 Survey, 27.1%).

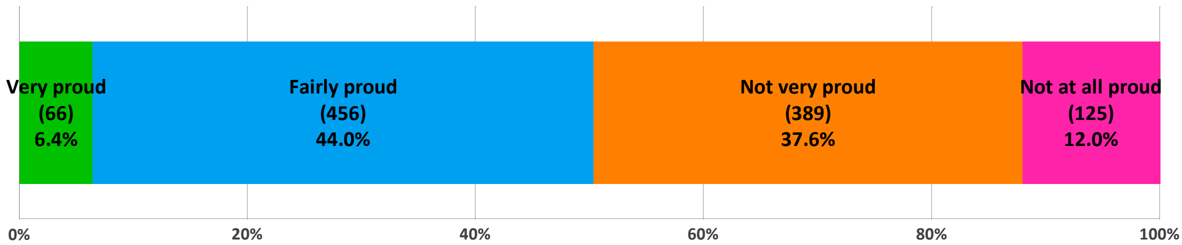
The following chart shows the proportion of those responding 'agree' across the different demographic groups.



	The 45 to 54 and the 55 to 64 age groups had the greatest proportions responding negatively at 37.3% (±6.9%) and 40.6% (±7.5%) respectively and the lowest proportions responding neutrally. The 75 years and over had the lowest proportion responding negatively at 25.5% (±7.7%). The 65 to 74 age group had the greatest proportion responding neutrally at 56.9% (±8.4%).
	Although there were no significant differences in the proportion responding positively and neutrally between respondents from minority groups and respondents from white groups, white groups had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 32.9% (±3.0%) answering this way compared to 17.7% (±10.6%) of respondents from minority groups.
	Disabled respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 40.2% (±8.0%) answering this way compared to 30.7% (±3.1%) of non-disabled respondents.
	Half of economically inactive respondents responded neutrally, significantly greater than the proportion responding the same who were economically active. Economically active respondents had significantly greater proportions answering both positively and negatively.

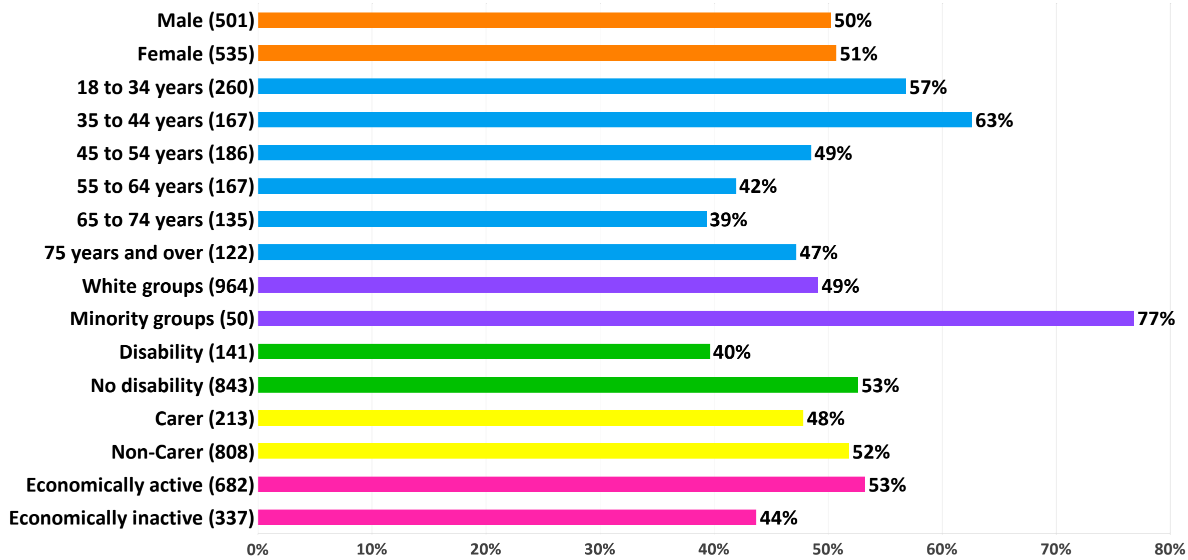
Pride in Maidstone Borough

The survey asked respondents: 'How proud are you of Maidstone Borough?', a total of 1036 responded to this question.



Overall, 50.4% (±3.0%) said they were either ‘very proud’ or ‘fairly proud’ of Maidstone Borough, a marginal decline from the 2021/22 Budget survey, undertaken Autumn 2020, where 51.1% (±3.1%) answered this way. The most common response was ‘fairly proud’ with 456 answering this way.

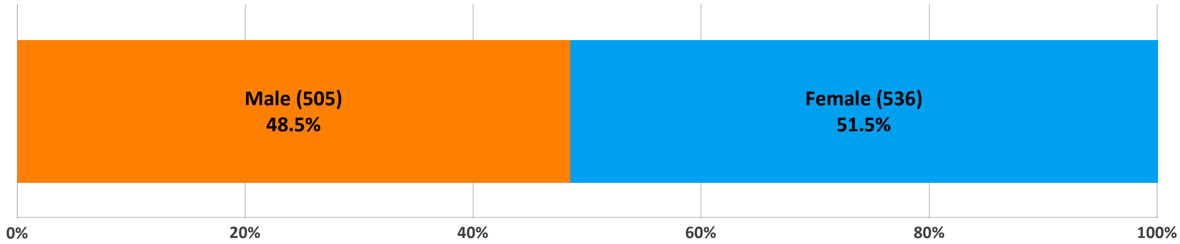
The chart below shows the proportion responding positively across the different demographic groups.



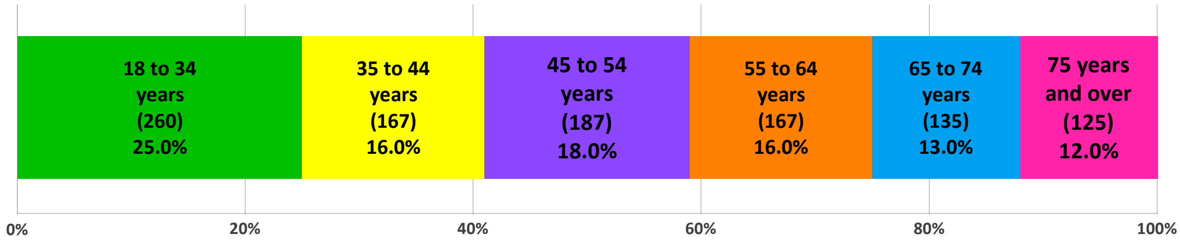
	Respondents in the 35 to 44 age group had the lowest proportion responding negatively. This result is significant when compared to the proportions responding the same from the ages groups over 45 years.
	The difference in the proportion of respondents answering positively between minority groups and white groups is significant. 50.9% (±3.9% of white group respondents answered negatively compared to 23.2% (±11.8%) of minority group respondents answering the same.
	Disabled respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 60.4% (±8.1%) answering this way compared to 47.4% (±3.4%) of non-disabled respondents.
	A significantly greater proportion of economically inactive respondents answered negatively with 56.3% (±5.3%) answering this way compared to 46.8% (±3.7%) of economically active respondents.

Survey Demographics

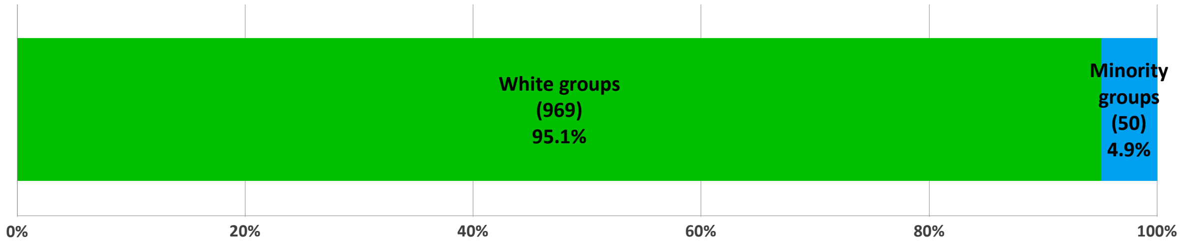
Gender



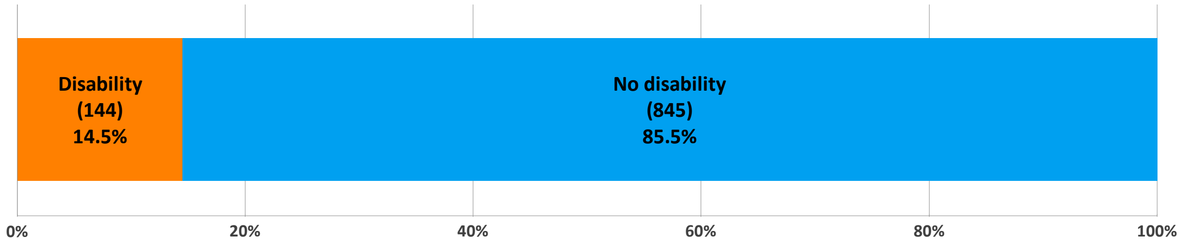
Age



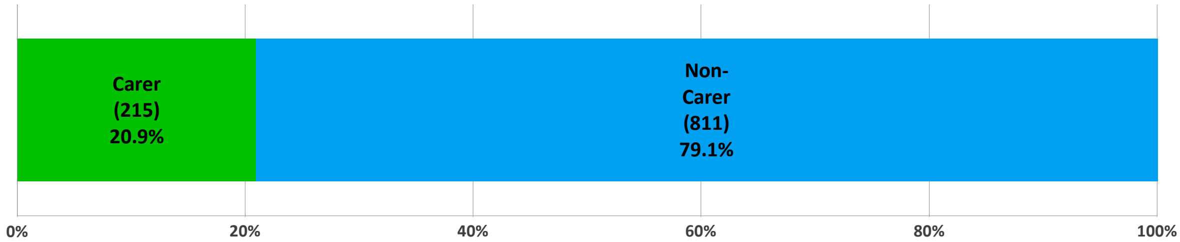
Ethnicity



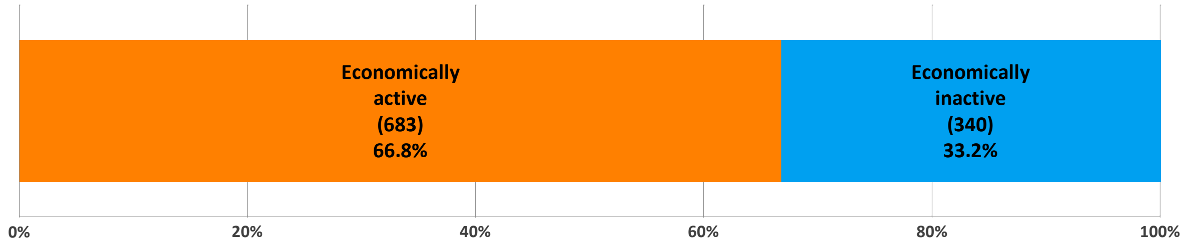
Disability



Carers



Economic Activity



Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	14 December 2021

Fees & Charges 2022-23

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2022-23 for the services within the remit of this committee. Fees and charges determined by the council are reviewed annually, and this forms part of the budget setting process. Changes to fees and charges agreed by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2022 unless otherwise stated in the report.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the proposed discretionary fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report are agreed.

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	14 December 2021
Policy & Resources Committee	15 December 2021

Fees & Charges 2022-23

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, the Council's policy on charging has been developed to support corporate priorities as set out in the strategic plan and the proposals within the report have been made with reference to this.	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations support the achievement of the cross cutting objectives by ensuring that costs of service delivery are recovered where possible, which enables services which support these objectives to be sustained.	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
Risk Management	This is covered within section 5 of the report.	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
Financial	Financial implications are set out in the body of the report. If agreed, this income will be incorporated into the Council's medium term financial strategy for 2022-23 onwards.	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
Staffing	The recommendations do not have any staffing implications.	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out within the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 permits best value authorities to charge for discretionary services provided the authority has the power to provide that service and the recipient agrees to take it up on those terms. The authority has a duty to ensure that taking one financial year with another, income does not exceed the costs of providing the service. A number of fees and charges for Council	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)

	services are set on a cost recovery basis only, with trading accounts used to ensure that the cost of service is clearly related to the charge made. In other cases, the fee is set by statute and the Council must charge the statutory fee. In both cases the proposals in this report meet the Council's legal obligations. Where a customer defaults on the fee or charge for a service, the fee or charge must be defendable, in order to recover it through legal action. Adherence to the MBC Charging Policy on setting fees and charges provides some assurance that appropriate factors have been considered in setting such fees and charges.	
Privacy and Data Protection	The recommendations do not have any privacy or data protection implications.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	The recommendations do not have any public health implications.	Head of Finance
Crime and Disorder	The recommendations do not have any public health implications.	Head of Finance
Procurement	The recommendations do not have any procurement implications.	Head of Finance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The recommendations do not have any implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Head of Finance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The council is able to recover the costs of providing certain services through making a charge to service users. For some services, this is a requirement and charges are set out in statute, and in other areas the council has discretion to determine whether charging is appropriate, and the level at which charges are set. All charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee are set at the council's discretion.

2.2 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly important feature of the council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on the revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible helps to ensure sustainability of the council's offer to residents and businesses, beyond the statutory minimum.

2.3 A charging policy (attached at Appendix 2 for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:

a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well services for which there is potential to charge in the future.

b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.

c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.

d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

2.4 The policy covers fees and charges that are set at the discretion of the council and does not apply to services where the council is prohibited from charging, e.g. the collection of household waste. Charges currently determined by central government, e.g. planning application fees, are also outside the scope of the policy.

2.5 Managers are asked to consider the following factors when reviewing fees and charges:

a) The council's strategic plan and values, and how charge supports these;

b) The use of subsidies and concessions targeted at certain user groups or to facilitate access to a service;

c) The actual or potential impact of competition in terms of price or quality;

d) Trends in user demand including an estimate of the effect of price changes on customers;

e) Customer survey results;

f) Impact on users, both directly and on delivering the council's objectives;

g) Financial constraints including inflationary pressure and service budgets;

h) The implications of developments such as investment made in a service;

i) The corporate impact on other service areas of council wide pressures to increase fees and charges;

j) Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;

k) Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation of any that took place in previous periods.

Proposed Fees & Charges for 2022-23

2.6 It is important that charges are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time.

2.7 Charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee have been reviewed by budget managers in line with the policy, as part of the development of the medium term financial strategy for 2022/23 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix 1 and the approval of the committee is sought to the amended discretionary fees and charges for 2022/23 as set out in that appendix.

2.8 Table 1 below summarises the 2020/21 outturn and 2021/22 estimate for income from the fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee.

2.9 The proposals are not expected to give rise to any increase or decrease in income budgets. The budgeted income levels have been provided for context to assist with consideration of fees and charges. They should be treated as indicative at this stage, and may be subject to change as the medium term financial strategy develops.

Fees and Charges

Service Area	2020-21 Outturn £	2021-22 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2022-23 Estimate £
Business Terrace	56,229	84,980	0	84,980
Business Terrace Expansion	114,636	184,590	0	184,590
Economic Development (Jubilee Square)	-4,553	3,500	0	3,500
Market	0	0	0	0
Museum	2,280	44,400	0	44,400
Total income from fees set by the Council	**168,592**	**317,470**	**0**	**317,470**

Table 1: Fees & Charges Summary (ERL)

2.10 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix 1 to this report, and considerations relating to these proposals have been summarised below.

2.11 Business Terrace & Business Terrace Expansion – No changes are proposed to the fees and charges in this area at this time, given the instability which the Covid 19 pandemic has caused within this sector of the market. This approach is intended to support business start-ups (including new tenants) with Covid 19 economic recovery.

2.12 Museum – A small number of changes have been made to charges in this area. Increases are proposed in some areas to ensure that charges maximise cost recovery, and decreases have been proposed in other areas in order to stimulate demand. The proposed changes are not expected to give rise to changes in income levels.

2.13 Market & Jubilee Square – It is proposed that charges in this area remain at their current level in order to support the future viability of the market.

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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1

The committee could approve the recommendations as set out in the report, adopting the fees and charges as proposed in Appendix 1. As these proposals have been developed in line with the council's policy on fees and charges, they will create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising income levels.

3.2 Option 2

The committee could propose alternative charges to those set out within Appendix 1. Any alternative increases may not be fully compliant with the policy, would require further consideration before implementation and may not deliver the necessary levels of income to ensure a balanced budget for 2022-23. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

3.3 Option 3

The committee could choose to do nothing and retain charges at their current levels. However, this might limit the Council's ability to recover the cost of delivering discretionary services and could result in the Council being unable to set a balanced budget for 2022-23.

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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Option 1 as set out above is recommended as the proposed fees and charges shown within Appendix 1 have been developed by budget managers in line with the Council's Charging Policy. The proposed charges are considered appropriate and are expected to create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising cost recovery. Changes to fees and charges agreed by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2022 unless otherwise stated.

5. RISK

5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 No consultation has been undertaken specifically relating to the proposals set out in the report. However, the Council has undertaken a survey of residents which will be used to inform wider decisions related to budget setting and spending priorities. The results of this survey are set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report, also on the agenda for this evening's meeting.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Policy and Resources Committee will receive an overarching report of all fees and charges proposals on 15 December 2021.

7.2 If agreed, the proposed changes to fees and charges, as set out within Appendix 1 will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2022.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Current and Proposed Fees & Charges – ERL Committee
- Appendix 2: Charging Policy

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23
Fees and Charges
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee

APPENDIX 1

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary I	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21 £	Current Estimate 2021-22 £	Current Charges 2021-2022 £	Proposed Charges 2022-2022 £	Change %	+ / - Income 2021-22 £	Estimate 2022-2022 £	Comments
Museum											
School Education Activities		×		1,805	24,300					24,300	
First workshop		×				85.00	90.00	5.88%			
Each Subsequent workshop		×				40.00	70.00	75.00%			Per additional class
Craft Sessions		×				85.00	70.00	-17.65%			To raise interest
Object Inspired		×				30.00	40.00	33.33%			Self-led package
Lunch room hire						15.00	20.00	33.33%			School charged to use lunch room if on an unpaid for visit
Outreach to schools											
Children's holiday activities		×									
Out with 1 staff member											
1 workshop		×				175.00	180.00	2.86%			
2 workshops		×				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
3 workshops		×				325.00	325.00	0.00%			
3 workshops + Giant craft		×				475.00	475.00	0.00%			
4 workshops		×				400.00	400.00	0.00%			
Out with 2 CLA											
Loan Boxes to schools per half term		×				50.00	50.00	0.00%			
Room hire		×		-617	5,000					5,000	
Glass Room - Per day		×				135.00	135.00	0.00%			Market testing post-Covid needed before price change
Library - Per day		×				220.00	220.00	0.00%			
Museum out of hours (based on 4 hours))		×				600.00	600.00	0.00%			
Events				262	8,000					8,000	
Per Child minimum charge depending on activity		×				3.00	3.00	0.00%			
Children's Parties	*			34	5,000					5,000	
Per Child minimum charge depending on activity		×				12.50	12.50	0.00%			
Carriage Museum Admission				0	1,600					1,600	
Adult		×				2.50	3.00	20.00%			
Senior Citizen- Separate fee no longer offered		×				1.00	n/a	n/a			Separate fee no longer offered
Child over 5		×				1.00	2.00	100.00%			
Family Ticket		×				5.00	7.00	40.00%			
Collections enquiries											
QORWK - enquiries		×		795	500	15.00	20	33.33%		500	QORWK enquiry £15 per family history enquiry. The fee is waived for collections based enquiries or where the museum gains research/information
Museum Total				**2,280**	**44,400**				**0**	**44,400**	

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23
Fees and Charges
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary I	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21 £	Current Estimate 2021-22 £	Current Charges 2021-2022 £	Proposed Charges 2022-2022 £	Change %	+ / - Income 2021-22 £	Estimate 2022-2022 £	Comments
Market											
Office Rent C250											
Mon/Tue/Fri charge per month 1st April - 31st March		×		-191	4,360	460.00	460.00	0.00%	0	4,360	
Tuesday & Saturday Market Pitches C223/C226				15,805	66,040				0	66,040	All pitch fees includes £1 contribution towards the Market Traders Fund
Open Market											
Regular Rate Market Square											Market Manager has discretion to vary these fees
Up to 10 feet - 1 April - 31 Dec		×				25.00	25.00	0.00%			
Up to 10 feet - 1 Jan - 31 Mar		×				18.00	18.00	0.00%			
Undercroft Rate - 1 April - 31 Dec		×				25.00	25.00	0.00%			
Undercroft Rate - 1 Jan - 31 Mar		×				18.00	18.00	0.00%			
Saturday Rate for 2 day Traders											Market Manager has discretion to vary these fees
Up to 10 feet (2 day Trader) - 1 April - 31 Dec		×				24.00	24.00	0.00%			
Up to 10 feet (2 day Trader) - 1 Jan - 31 Mar		×				17.00	17.00	0.00%			
Lettings-General C251/D358/C227				9,337	69,940				0	69,940	
Hire of Agricultural Hall											
Standard Hire - per day - regular hire		×				400.00	400.00	0.00%			Regular hire - twice per month
Standard Hire - per day - casual hire		×				495.00	495.00	0.00%			Casual hire - once per month
Standard Hire minimum 3 hours		×				35.00	35.00	0.00%			£35.00 per hour / £105 per session to C251
Boot Fair -When in undercroft											
10' - pitch (£10 per each additional 10' pitch)		×				15.00	15.00	0.00%			Market Manager has discretion to vary these fees
Commercial Hire											
Per half day (maximum 8 hours)		×				550.00	550.00	0.00%			Market Manager to consider the commercial viability when confirming these
Per day (over 8 hours)		×				1,050.00	1,050.00	0.00%			charges to secure the booking
Hire of chairs for events - per 100		×				50.00	50.00	0.00%			Charged pro rata
Farmers Market C253		×		0	3,500	25.00	25.00	0.00%	0	3,500	
Every other Friday - daily rate											
April - March											
Market Total				**24,951**	**143,840**				**0**	**143,840**	

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23
Fees and Charges
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary I	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21 £	Current Estimate 2021-22 £	Current Charges 2021-2022 £	Proposed Charges 2022-2022 £	Change %	+ / - Income 2021-22 £	Estimate 2022-2022 £	Comments
Business Terrace											
Offices (month)				40,900	57,140				0	57,140	
Office 1		x				600.00	600.00	0.00%			
Office 2		x				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
Office 3		x				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
Office 4		x				200.00	200.00	0.00%			
Office 5		x				360.00	360.00	0.00%			
Office 6		x				360.00	360.00	0.00%			
Office 7		x				525.00	525.00	0.00%			
Office 8		x				375.00	375.00	0.00%			
Office 9		x				500.00	500.00	0.00%			
Office 10		x				375.00	375.00	0.00%			
Office 11		x				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
Office 12		x				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
Hot desks and meeting space				15,329	27,840				0	27,840	
Hot desk day pass		x				12.00	12.00	0.00%			
Hot desk package 30 (month)		x				48.00	48.00	0.00%			
Hot desk package 50 (month)		x				75.00	75.00	0.00%			
Hot desk package 100 (month)		x				144.00	144.00	0.00%			
Hot desk unlimited (month)		x				195.00	195.00	0.00%			
Meeting room (hour)		x				6.00	6.00	0.00%			
Seminar Room (half day)		x				70.00	70.00	0.00%			
Seminar Room (full day)		x				150.00	150.00	0.00%			
Business Terrace Total				**56,229**	**84,980**				**0**	**84,980**	

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary I	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21 £	Current Estimate 2021-22 £	Current Charges 2021-2022 £	Proposed Charges 2022-2022 £	Change %	+ / - Income 2021-22 £	Estimate 2022-2022 £	Comments
Business Terrace Expansion											
Offices (month)				114,636	184,590				0	184,590	
Office 13		×				861.90	861.90	0.00%			
Office 14		×				505.92	505.92	0.00%			
Office 15		×				1,486.14	1,486.14	0.00%			
Office 16		×				1,165.00	1,165.00	0.00%			
Office 17		×				1,078.00	1,078.00	0.00%			
Office 18		×				1,665.00	1,665.00	0.00%			
Office 19		×				3,177.00	3,177.00	0.00%			
Office 20		×				849.00	849.00	0.00%			
Office 21		×				848.00	848.00	0.00%			
Office 22		×				1,978.00	1,978.00	0.00%			
Office 23						1,856.40	1,856.40	0.00%			
Business Terrace Expansion Total				**114,636**	**184,590**				**0**	**184,590**	

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23
Fees and Charges
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary I	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21 £	Current Estimate 2021-22 £	Current Charges 2021-2022 £	Proposed Charges 2022-2022 £	Change %	+ / - Income 2021-22 £	Estimate 2022-2022 £	Comments
Economic Development-Jubilee Square											
Jubilee Square (EN40 B724)				-4,553	3,500					3,500	
Use of premises licence		x				70.00	70.00	0.00%			
Use of electricity - 3 phase (incl Openreach call out)		x				80.00	80.00	0.00%			
Use of Electricity (Without Openreach call out)		x				20.00	20.00	0.00%			
Promotional/Comercial use inc admin fee		x				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
Events/Educational Promotion (min) charity / public sector admin fee		x				50.00	50.00	0.00%			
Economic Development Total				**-4,553**	**3,500**				**0**	**3,500**	
GRAND TOTAL				**193,544**	**461,310**				**0**	**461,310**	

Maidstone Borough Council Charging Policy November 2017

Maidstone Borough Council
Charging Policy

1 Introduction and Context

1.1 At Maidstone Borough Council, fees and charges represent an important source of income which is used to support the delivery of the Council's objectives. Currently income from fees and charges constitutes just under a third of the council's funding.

1.2 The Council needs to ensure that its charges are reviewed regularly, and that they contribute towards the achievement of its priorities. It is also important to ensure that fees and charges do not discriminate against individuals or groups by excluding them from accessing council services.

1.3 Pressure on the Council's budgets has increased the incentive to make best use of charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using this as a means of recovering the costs of delivering services.

1.4 Under the Council's constitution, responsibility for setting discretionary fees and charges is delegated to service committees and directors. Each committee will review the fees and charges for the services within its remit at least annually as part of the budget setting process to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate.

1.5 Where the Council has the discretion to set the charge for a service, it is important that the implications of this decision are fully understood, and that decision makers are equipped with sufficient information to enable rational decisions to be made.

2 Policy Aims and Objectives

2.1 The aim of this policy is to establish a framework within which fees and charges levied by the Council are agreed and reviewed.

2.2 The Council must ensure that charges are set at an appropriate level which maximises cost recovery. Unless it would conflict with the Council's strategic priorities, other policies, contracts or the law then the Council should aim to maximise net income from fees and charges.

2.3 The policy aims to ensure that:-

a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well as services for which there is potential to charge in the future.

b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.

c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.

d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

3 Scope

3.1 This policy relates to fees and charges currently being levied by the Council and those which are permissible under the wider general powers to provide and charge for "Discretionary Services" included within the Local Government Act 2003 and Localism Act 2011. It does not cover services for which the council is prohibited from charging.

3.2 Fees for statutory services delivered by the council, but for which charges are set by central government, rents, leases, council tax, and business rates are outside the scope of this policy.

3.3 In general, charges should ensure that service users make a direct contribution to the cost of providing a service. However, there may be certain circumstances where this would not be appropriate. For example:

- Where the council is prohibited from charging for the service (e.g. collection of household waste)
- Where the introduction of a charge would impede delivery of corporate priorities;
- Where administrative costs of charging outweigh the potential income;
- Where the service is seen to be funded from Council Tax (i.e. services which are provided and delivered equally to all residents)
- Where the government sets the fee structure (e.g. pollution permits and private water fees)

4 Principles

4.1 The following overarching principles apply for the consideration and review of all current and future fees and charges levied by the council:

- Fees and charges should maximise cost recovery and where appropriate, income generation, to the extent that the Council's legal powers permit, providing that this would not present any conflict with the Council's strategic objectives;
- Fees and charges should support the improvement of services, and the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities, as set out in the strategic plan;

- Where a subsidy or concession is provided for a service, this must be targeted towards the delivery of strategic priorities, for example, by facilitating access to services;
- The process for setting and updating fees and charges should be administratively simple, transparent and fair, and for budgeting purposes, income projections must be robust and rational.

5 Process and Frequency for Reviewing Charges

5.1 The following arrangements for reviewing charges will be applied throughout the Council, for existing charges as well as those which in principle could be introduced.

5.2 In accordance with the Council's constitution, '*Discretionary fees and charges will be reviewed and fixed each year by the Committee responsible for the function or the Service Director as appropriate having considered a report from the Director or duly authorised Officer in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer, as part of the estimate cycle*.'

5.3 This annual review will ensure consistency with the Council's priorities, policy framework, service aims, market sensitivity, customer preferences, income generation needs and that any subsidy made by the Council is justifiable.

5.4 Heads of Service and budget managers will be asked to complete a schedule setting out all proposed fees and charges for the services in their area (including those which are not set by the council). This will usually take place in autumn for the following financial year and review the current year. By this means, any growth or savings resulting from fees and charges can be built into the budget strategy. The schedule will indicate:

- The service or supply to which the charge relates;
- Who determines the charges;
- The basis for the charge (e.g. units or hourly rates);
- The existing charge;
- The total income budget for the current year;
- The proposed charge;
- Percentage increase/decrease;
- Effective date for increase/decrease; and
- Estimated income for the next financial year after introducing the change.

An example schedule is provided at Appendix B.

5.5 Following this, the proposals will be collated by the Finance section into a report for each committee to consider the appropriateness of proposed fees and charges for the services within their remit. The report will clearly identify the charges for which the committee can apply discretion, and distinguish these from the charges which are set externally and included for information only. Policy and Resources Committee will then receive a final report which brings together the proposals from each of the three service committees, in order to assess the overall impact of the proposed changes, and consider the potential impact on customers and service users.

5.6 The timing of the annual review will ensure that changes can be incorporated into the council's budget for the forthcoming financial year, although changes to fees and charges may be made outside of this process if required through a report to the relevant director or service committee.

5.7 It is possible that the review may lead to a conclusion that charges should remain at the existing level. If this is the case, then the outcomes of the review, including the justification for not increasing the charge need to be documented and reported to the relevant service committee.

5.8 For the avoidance of doubt, periodic reviews of the rents and leases are not covered by the above. Individual reviews will be implemented by the relevant officer as long as market levels at least are achieved.

6 Guidance

6.1 A checklist of issues for budget managers and Heads of Service to consider when determining the level at which to set fees and charges is provided at Appendix A to this policy.

6.2 Below is a list of guiding principles intended to assist decision makers in determining the appropriate level at which to set fees and charges:

a) Any subsidy from the Council tax payer to service users should be transparent and justifiable.

b) Fees and charges may be used to manage demand for a service, and price elasticity of demand should be considered when determining the level at which charges should be set.

c) Fees and charges should not be used to provide subsidies to commercial operators.

d) Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern and a fair and consistent approach should be taken to ensuring the ensure recovery of all fees and charges.

e) Fees and charges should reflect key commitments and corporate priorities.

f) Prices could be based on added and perceived value, which takes account of wider economic and social considerations, as well as cost.

g) There should be some rational scale in the charge for different levels of the same service and there should be consistency between charges for similar services.

h) Policies for fees and charges should fit with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and, where appropriate, should be used to generate income to help develop capacity, to deliver efficiency and sustain continuous improvement.

i) In certain areas, charging may be used to generate surpluses which can be used to finance other services.

6.3 Wherever possible, charges should be recovered in advance or at the point of service delivery. If this is not possible, then invoices should be issued promptly and appropriate recovery procedures will be followed as required. Use of direct debit should be encouraged for periodic payments where this would improve cost effectiveness and enable efficient and timely collection of income.

7 Cost Recovery Limitation

7.1 Generally speaking, charges should be set at a level which enables all the costs of delivering a service to be recovered, although there are some exceptions to this identified earlier in this document. This includes direct costs such as the purchase of goods for resale, as well as indirect costs such as management and accommodation costs.

7.2 For certain services, legislation prohibits the Council from generating surpluses through charging. The general principle is that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges must not exceed the costs of provision. Examples where this applies include building control and local land charges.

7.3 Any over or under recovery that resulted in a surplus or deficit of income in relation to costs in one period should be addressed when setting its charges for future periods so that, over time, income equates to costs.

7.4 Councils are free to decide what methodology to adopt to assess costs. Maidstone Borough Council follows the Service Reporting Code of Practice definition of total cost, including an allocation of all related support costs, plus an appropriate share of corporate and democratic core and non-distributed costs. Further guidance and support on calculating the full cost of service provision can be obtained from the Finance section.

8 Concessions & Subsidies

8.1 The normal level of fees and charges may be amended to allow for concessions targeted at certain user groups to encourage or facilitate access to the service.

8.2 Where concessions are proposed or already in place they must be justified in terms of overall business reasons, or implementation of key strategic considerations e.g. community safety, healthy living.

8.3 Examples of concessions and the reasons why they are awarded are:-

- Reductions for older people or children to encourage different age groups to participate in the sport which is linked to the promotion of public health;
- Free spaces for disabled drivers in Council car parks to support social inclusion:
- Concessions for new casual traders at the market to stimulate new usage;

8.4 In some cases, it may also be justifiable to subsidise a service for all users, where it would support delivery of strategic priorities.

8.5 In some circumstances, it may also be suitable to implement a system of means testing for managing access to concessions and subsidies, in order to ensure that subsidy can be targeted appropriately.

8.6 A fair and consistent approach should be taken to the application of concessionary schemes, and decisions should recognise the Council's broader agenda on promoting equality, as set out in the Equality Policy. When considering new charges, or significant changes to an existing charge, the budget manager should complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).

8.7 All decisions regarding concessions and subsidies should include consideration of the impact the Council's ability to generate income and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9 Introducing a new charge

9.1 Proposals to introduce new charges should be considered as part of the service planning process and income projections should be factored into the Council's medium term financial plan.

9.2 Reasonable notice should be given to customers and service users prior to the introduction of a new charge, along with advice on concessions and discounts available.

9.3 Proposals should be based on robust evidence, and will incorporate the anticipated financial impact of introducing the charge, as well as the potential impact on demand for the service.

9.4 Performance should be monitored closely following implementation to enable amendments to the charge to be made if required, and the charge will subsequently be picked up as part of the annual review process.

10 Monitoring

10.1 Income levels will be monitored throughout the year and reported to committees through the quarterly reporting process. Significant variances may be addressed through an amended to charges, which will require approval from the appropriate Director or Service Committee.

10.2 The impact of changes in demand for services will be monitored through quarterly performance monitoring reports, where this is identified as a key performance indicator.

Appendices

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

The below checklist may be used as a guide for managers when reviewing existing charges or implementing a new fee structure.

Have you considered the following?	**Y/N/NA**	**Comments**
1. How does the charge link to the Council's corporate priorities?		
2. Does the charge enable the council to recover all costs of providing the service?		
3. If the answer to question 2 is 'No', have you considered increasing the charge to enable full cost recovery?		
4. Has the impact of inflation on the cost of service delivery been reflected in the proposed charge?		
5. Do the administrative costs of charging or increasing the charge outweigh the potential income to be generated?		
6. Is the charge being used to deter or incentivise certain behaviours?		
7. Has there been any investment in the service to effect an increase in charges?		
8. If there is a market for the service or supply, has the impact of market conditions and competition be considered in setting the charge?		
9. How sensitive is the price to demand for the service? Is there a risk that an increase in charge could deter potential customers?		
10. If applicable, have consultation results been taken into account?		

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

11. Could the charges or income budget be increased to support the delivery of a savings target?		
12. What would the impact of the change be on customers, and how does this affect the delivery of corporate priorities?		
13. Have any alternative charging structures been considered?		
14. How will the service be promoted? How successful have previous promotions been in generating demand?		
15. New charges only - are there any legal factors which impact on the scope for charging (e.g. an obligation to limit charges to cost recovery only)?		
16. New charges only - has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed?		
17. If applicable, have concessionary charges been considered on a fair and consistent basis?		

Signed: ____________________________ **Date:** ____________________________

Name: ____________________________ **Chargeable Service/Supply:** ____________________________

Job Title: ____________________________ **Department:** ____________________________

Appendix B – Example Schedule of Fees & Charges

	Fess and Charges April 2017 - March 2018	* Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	2016-2017 Actuals	2017 -2018 Current Estimate	Current Charges 2017-2018	Proposed Charges 2018-2019	% Change	2017-2018 + / - Income	2018 -2019 Estimate	Comments
EA31	**Street Naming & Numbering**											
					66,995	49,000				0	49,000	
	Name change						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Addition of Name to numbered Property						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Amendment to Postal Address						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Build - Individual Property						75.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Official Registration of Postal Address previously not Registered						50.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Development - Fee per unit/flat						40.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Creation of New Street						100.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Renumbering of Development or Block of Flats - Fee per unit/flat						20.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Street Naming & Numbering Total				**66,995**	**49,000**				**0**	**49,000**	

Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	**14 December 2021**

Maidstone Leisure Centre

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

A report on the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre

Purpose of Report
Discussion

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the feedback arising from the discussion on the report be used to inform a further report to the Committee with more detailed proposals on the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre.

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	14 December 2021

Maidstone Leisure Centre

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The four Strategic Plan objectives are: • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place Maidstone Leisure Centre materially improves the Council's ability to achieve A Thriving Place.	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The four cross-cutting objectives are: • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected Maidstone Leisure Centre: • supports the achievement of the Health Inequalities being Addressed and Reduced, • makes a positive contribution to deprivation and social mobility being improved • and can make a positive contribution to improving biodiversity and environmental sustainability	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	Refer to paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2.	Leisure Manager
Financial	The financial arrangements beyond the current operating contract end date will be a key factor in determining the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre.	Senior Finance Manager

	Funding for a new or refurbished centre will be included in the new draft 5 year capital programme that is currently being developed.	
Staffing	We will continue to develop proposals with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	This report is for discussion only and there are no legal implications at this stage.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning
Privacy and Data Protection	Project data is held by the Council in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	We recognise a project resulting out of these discussions may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Impacts will be carefully considered and included in an EqIA.	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	The leisure centre has a positive impact on residents, most noticeably those in the borough's most deprived wards. Future proposals will help Council fulfil the requirements of the health cross-cutting objective.	Housing and Inclusion Team Leader
Crime and Disorder	The project will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder.	Leisure Manager
Procurement	The Council will complete procurement exercises and will conduct those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The Council's Biodiversity Climate Change Action Plan includes a focus on decarbonising its buildings and fleet vehicles. Future leisure centre proposals can have a positive impact on achieving a zero carbon Maidstone.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Making Maidstone More Active (MMMA) review began in 2019 with a public survey. It was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but via increased partnership working with Sport England, the research into the future sporting and physical activity needs of the borough has continued through the completion of a Sport England Strategic Objectives Planning Guidance (SOPG) report. Maidstone's SOPG report is included as appendix 1.

2.2 The SOPG is a Sport England framework that enables local authorities to complete a holistic review and needs analysis before developing any leisure provision plans. The SOPG:

- Incorporates analysis of current work on health and physical activity in the borough
- Includes gap analysis and facilities planning models
- Assesses the impact on the most vulnerable communities
- Evaluates available solutions and forms them around the future needs of the population and the borough.

The SOPG report in its entirety proposes future operational models for Maidstone Leisure Centre which may or may not include linked leisure delivery in rural location, and may or may not include co-located health services at Maidstone Leisure Centre.

2.3 Maidstone Leisure Centre is the only leisure centre owned by the Council. It is located at Mote Park and was originally built in the early seventies as a swimming baths. In the late eighties work began to extend it to include the sports hall, the leisure pool and health and fitness gym. It is a very large building of more than 13,400m2 in size. In 2009 the centre underwent a largely cosmetic refurbishment as part of its current operational contract with Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure Ltd. Pre-Covid the centre achieved more than 800,000 visits per year and annual turnover was £3.25m. The centre offers:

- Fitness pool
- Diving pool
- Leisure pool
- Two teaching pools
- 100-station gym
- Exercise studio
- Cycling studio
- Soft play and indoor polar adventure play area
- 6 badminton court-sized sports hall

2.4 The leisure centre is operated via a lease and contract agreement with Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure Ltd. The current contract arrangement was set in 2009. The Council pays £624,000 per annum for the capital and financing costs of the 2009 refurbishment of the centre. In return the Council receives a contract fee from Serco Leisure of £200,000 per annum. There is a profit share arrangement with surpluses shared in three equal amounts between the Council, Maidstone Leisure Trust and

Serco Leisure. In recent years the profit share amounts have decreased and since the Covid-19 pandemic there have been no annual profits.

2.5 The contract also has a utilities threshold in it, with the Council being obliged to contribute additional funds to the budget where the unit cost of utilities rises above the rate of inflation. This clause has increasing significance with the recent above-inflation rises in energy prices. The annual contract costs are shown in table 1 below.

Item	Payable by the Council	Payable to the Council
Capital and financing costs of refurbishment	£624,000 pa	
Utilities obligation	£25,000 pa (estimated for 2021)	
Contract sum		-£200,000 pa
Totals	£649,000 pa	-£200,000 pa
	£449,000 pa	

Table 1. revenue sums of the current leisure centre contract model

2.6 The current contract arrangement ends in August 2024 and in preparation for the contract end the Council must make plans for what the future of the building, its operation and the sports facilities it wants to provide.

Financial factors

2.7 The current contract provides an annual budget for repairs and maintenance. Extending this arrangement becomes a law of diminishing returns as the building gets older and more expensive to maintain, while also becoming less appealing and functional compared to modern standards. The current sums in the budget are all based on 2009 prices. Adjusting for inflation alone could mean that the annual nett cost of £449,000 equates to £633,000 in 2021 prices. This does not factor in the increasing cost of the ageing plant and building fabric.

2.8 The building has two separate pool plant areas, one built for the original fitness pool and the other added with the leisure pool extension. Running two manual systems is very labour intensive and some parts for the Maidstone system are becoming obsolete or harder to obtain.

Environmental factors

2.9 The leisure centre is one of the largest contributors of carbon emissions in the Council's portfolio. In 2020, which included long periods of closure, it contributed 526 tonnes of carbon emissions to the borough (526tCO_2e). To meet its carbon net zero targets the Council will need to make significant changes to the way energy is generated and utilised at the leisure centre. The building will continue to have a large impact on the borough's carbon emissions.

2.10 The building uses traditional boilers to generate heat and power. It also has a combined heat and power (CHP) unit that makes energy usage more efficient on site. The main challenge with energy at Maidstone Leisure Centre is the inefficient use of space in the pool and café area. This area was designed to be open plan, but that indirectly means that to heat the pools to the required temperature, the café space and the children's play area space, also have to be heated. Heat is also lost to the adjoining reception area. The high glazed ceiling in this area means a lot of heat is lost vertically as well. This situation also creates challenges for the customers and staff using the areas because the temperatures required for those who are swimming are much higher than a comfortable temperature for sitting in the café or playing in the play area.

Social factors

2.11 The centre reduces health inequalities and supports residents to be more physically active. It is home to numerous sports clubs who meet multiple times per week for sporting activities and it also provides opportunities for interaction and enjoyment for all users. The centre hosts weight management groups and is also the place where hundreds of children learn to swim each year, either through the centre's swim programme or through visits they attend with their school. Maidstone has only four pools that are 25m in length and one of those is at Maidstone Leisure Centre. Only two pools in the borough allow the public to access them on a pay-per-visit basis. Maidstone Leisure Centre is one of them. The others all require a membership.

2.12 The layout of the centre poses a number of accessibility challenges. The ramp at the front of the building is steep and once inside, the many corridors with tight corners and double doors to go through, make getting around more difficult than it needs to be. Because the building has been built up and added to over the years it has a number of floors and staircases. The customer lift is in the heart of the building which means customers who use it have to make a journey to get to it before being able to go up to their chosen floor. Sometimes the shortest way of making a journey via the lift involves going through a room or a space that is being used for an exercise class.

2.13 The swimming pools at Maidstone have filtration gullies which sit above the water level and below the level of the pool deck surround. This is a traditional set up where the water level is approximately 12 inches below the tiled flooring that customers walk on. Modern pools are deck level, where the water level comes up to the level of the tiled deck surround. Deck level pools make it easier for everyone to get in and out of the water via wide access staircases, and they make modern pool pods possible. Pool pods are a dignified way of enabling people who require assistance to get in and out of the water. Kent has a shortage of eight-lane swimming pools and Kent County Amateur Swimming Association competitions are often held outside of the county. With such demand Maidstone would be a good location for a 25m, eight-lane, competition standard swimming pool.

2.14 The leisure centre sports hall is both a sports hall and the Mote Hall concert and performance venue. Concerts and events, with their set up time and breakdown time, can take the sports hall out of action for more than 20 weekends per year. This provides a concert and events space to the borough, which is larger than the Hazlitt Theatre, but it also diminishes the opportunities available for regular weekend indoor sport. The centre cannot offer regular weekend access to gymnastics, trampoline or badminton clubs because of the irregular pattern of disruption caused by events. The same is the case for individuals who wish to secure a regular, repeat weekend booking for their activities. Latest data in the Local Plan review shows that the borough has 10 sports halls with community access, eight of which are on school sites. There is no current spare peak-time capacity in the borough and overall the borough has a projected deficit of eight badminton courts' of space by 2037, with those courts being fully available to the public. This situation is exacerbated by Mote Hall being unavailable to sport for large sections of the calendar. Future plans should seek to address this issue so that more indoor space can be provided to sporting activity.

2.15 The Council has a social ambition to work with health partners to explore the co-location of services to the leisure centre, and these are much harder to achieve in the current building because of the challenges of accessibility.

Future options – the three R's

2.16 The Making Maidstone More Active project, now supported by the Sport England SOPG work referenced at paragraph 2.2, is reviewing the future of leisure provision for the borough. Crucial to any decisions the council makes about provision elsewhere in the borough is understanding the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre. Regarding the leisure centre, the Council has three options for the end of the contract in 2024. These are summarised below and explored in more detail in section 3. The options can be defined as:

- **Repeat** - Repeat the current contract cycle with the building in the same condition and plan for an ongoing repairs and maintenance schedule.

- **Refurbish** - Refurbish the leisure centre and then tender the operations contract with ongoing repairs and maintenance obligations in a refurbished building.

- **Redevelop** - Redevelop the leisure centre and replace it with a brand-new centre at Mote Park, which can either be on the existing footprint or on a new footprint. This will ensure continuity of leisure centre service during the construction period.

2.17 The SOPG report and the Sports Facilities Strategy written for the Local Plan review identify that there is not sufficient population currently in the rural areas to support the creation of a second leisure centre in that area. The southern rural service centres and villages of Maidstone have a strong sports club base, many of whom are looking to expand and grow to meet demand, but the population in those areas alone will not support another leisure centre.

2.18 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is exploring a new leisure centre in Paddock Wood, which in geographical terms would have a catchment area that includes rural Maidstone. Future demand can also be addressed through the Lenham Heath development, which has the opportunity to include leisure provision in its creation. Making Maidstone More Active will begin its community workshops in the rural areas of the borough to gauge leisure behaviours in those wards and communities and assess what may have changed since the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.19 The SOPG report proposes a hub and spoke model that can exist with central leisure provision in the town centre being supported by either small-scale facilities or outreach leisure provision in the southern rural service centres. Members are invited to share their thoughts on such a hub and spoke model.

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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 In this section the merits and challenges of a repeat, a refurbishment and a redevelop option will be explored.

Repeat

3.2 The current 15-year contract with Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure Ltd expires in August 2024. The Council has an option to extend this contract by up to 50% of its value and retain Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco as the operator under the existing contract terms until 2030. This will require the agreement of all parties and therefore there is a risk that this option is not possible or available to the Council.

3.3 In the repeat option, the Council could also choose to end the Serco Leisure contract and tender for a new operator for a different period and new contract terms altogether. Tendering the building in its current condition is likely to mean operators price their bids accordingly, with the Council being responsible for any risks associated with the age and condition of the building and any further risks associated with the price of energy. The repeat options are only short-term options. They do not address the questions of the age of the building, and the difficulties in maximising environmental and social benefits will persist.

Refurbish the leisure centre

3.4 A refurbishment of the leisure centre will enable capital to be directed at the areas of the building that need it most. It can range from cosmetic changes and updates to a major replacement of the plant and mechanical and engineering components and a reconfiguration of walls and spaces. To maximise the benefits, particularly in social and environmental factors, a refurbishment of Maidstone Leisure Centre will achieve better outcomes if it is a large-scale project. The overall refurbishment cost can be set by the Council to be any value from six figures up to many millions, but can still be less than the price of a redevelopment. Through a refurbishment the Council can seek to address the accessibility points by providing a better layout and circulation around the building and address the energy efficiency of the building by adding the latest technology into the building structure and fabric.

3.5 A condition survey of the building was last completed in 2019. It advised how the remaining repairs budget should be spent and did not advise on long-term issues beyond 2024. This needs to be understood in more detail and it can form part of a future report brought to this committee.

3.6 Through the SOPG process, architects and surveyors have visited Maidstone Leisure Centre and they have noted the initial observations:

1. Previous extensions and alterations have left Maidstone Leisure Centre (MLC) with lots of corridors and circulation space. This is uninviting for customers and inefficient in design. A refurbishment should seek to consolidate space.

2. MLC's gym is across three floors and badly connected. A refurbishment will give best results if it can be accommodated on one floor and if windows can be added that give views over Mote Park.

3. The building fabric is in good condition given the age of the building, but the thermal and airtightness performance of the existing envelope is likely to fall significantly short of current standards. A refurbishment should aim to address this.

4. The pool hall has no separation from the café area, reception and indoor play area. This makes temperature control problematic because the café and indoor play areas are heated to pool environment temperatures and the building does not recycle this heat in an efficient way. A refurbishment should separate these spaces and encapsulate the pool environment more to give more control over temperature.

5. The existing pools at MLC are not deck level and this compromises safety, accessibility and filtration standards. Adjusting this in a refurbishment will deliver significant benefits. The age of the pools means that draining them is a structural risk. Current repairs are carried out under water at a much higher cost.

6. The pools at MLC are operated from two separate plant rooms, one dating from the seventies and the other from the nineties. A refurbishment of pool plant will need to involve upgrading two ageing systems.

7. Pool viewing, particularly for parents viewing the teaching pools, is below customer expectations and the location of pools and adjacent corridor spaces makes this difficult to remedy.

3.7 A refurbishment can range from cosmetic improvements to a full structural remodelling and include all variations in between. The larger the project the more sustainable and long-lasting the impacts on customer satisfaction and positive social, financial and environmental benefits. Improvements to the plant and the airtightness of the building will have a significant impact on the contribution the centre makes to the borough’s carbon emissions.

3.8 A structural refurbishment of the centre will deliver maximum benefits but it will need to work within the confines of the existing supporting walls and the ground levels. Maidstone Leisure Centre is built across three internal floors and also has an external ramp joining it to its car park.

3.9 A large-scale refurbishment will require the building to either close entirely for a long period or it will require the building to operate a series of part closures and service disruptions so that some facilities remain open while others are being developed. This will result in additional costs to the Council in terms of service disruption and an extended construction period.

Redevelopment options

3.10 If undertaking a rebuild the Council does not need to be limited to the footprint of the existing building, which at 13,400m2 is very large for a leisure centre. The facilities that a new centre is likely to require can be accommodated in a building between 8,500m2 and 9,000m2 because of better use of corridors and circulation areas. Other locations for the building have been considered but the Mote Park location is key for future physical activity and health interventions in Maidstone. As well as being walking distance from the town centre, it has sufficient space for a leisure centre footprint with parking and is adjacent to the most deprived wards in the borough. Being next to Mote Park enables indoor and outdoor activities, such as the Outdoor Adventure, to operate side by side, which has business efficiency benefits. A sports centre at this location supports outdoor sports pitches with changing rooms and storage and there are also synergies with the neighbouring Mote Cricket Club, Maidstone Rugby Club, The Mote Squash Club and Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club.

3.11 The SOPG process has considered locations on or near the existing Leisure Centre. These are shown in appendix 2. (The layouts and facilities in appendix 2 are for illustration only).

3.12 To summarise the development options for this report, a new leisure centre at Mote Park could be built:

1. On the footprint of the existing building
2. On the existing car park
3. On a space identified to the north of the leisure centre, encompassing some of Mote Park and some of the rugby club land
4. On the rugby club pitch that sits adjacent to the leisure centre car park

Development option	**Comments and information**
Option 1	This site already includes a leisure centre so no change of use from a planning perspective.

	Loss of service during the construction phase is likely to be 2-3 years which will have significant detrimental health outcomes. Sports clubs will need to find new temporary homes. Members and customers will need to find new centres to use. Clubs, members and customers will need to be attracted back to the new centre. Significant loss of swimming space in the borough for 2-3 years will result in hundreds of children not being able to attend swimming lessons for a key part of their childhood. This has substantial negative outcomes in a key life skills area.
Option 2	The car park can accommodate a leisure centre building but it will be constricted in its design by the narrowness of the car park and the proximity to residential properties. The current centre would operate without a car park during the construction period and a new car park would have to be provided, which could be on the footprint of the existing leisure centre.
Option 3	This location would facilitate construction while the current leisure centre and car park continued in operation. The existing leisure centre could then be decommissioned and made available for additional leisure facilities or returned to the park landscape. The location of option 3 includes a local wildlife site comprising mature trees running east to west and hedgerow and undergrowth running north to south at the boundary between Mote Park and the rugby club.
Option 4	This location would facilitate construction while the current leisure centre and car park continued in operation. The car park could continue to be used as the car park for the new centre and the existing leisure centre could then be decommissioned and made available for additional leisure facilities or returned to the park landscape. This location is not on land owned by the Council. It will require the assistance of and collaboration with the Mote Cricket Club and Maidstone Rugby Club. The clubs are working on their own capital development plans and this option would impact

	on those plans. This option will cause substantial disruption to the clubs in the short term, but long term it could deliver benefits to all parties. The existing leisure centre land could be used to replace pitches and these could be grass or artificial.

Table 2 showing details of four new leisure centre options

3.13 Discussions have taken place with the Mote Trustees of Mote Cricket Club and the committee of Maidstone Rugby Club to look at how the options above could be accommodated at Mote Park. The options in appendix 2 have been presented to both clubs. Both clubs are open to working together to find a mutually beneficial masterplan for the site and would like to explore other options to create a sport and leisure hub at Mote Park. One indicative whole site plan is included as appendix 3 to highlight how the required facilities could fit on to the available land. This is not a final plan. Further ideas from both clubs are still emerging and there is no commitment for a preferred scheme at the moment.

3.14 Developing a new leisure centre at Mote Park makes it easier for other services to be co-located into the building. Post 2024, the Council can add additional specification to its leisure centre services and can include health KPIs, weight management, smoking cessation and other services as core functions of the operation. This is possible in a refurbished or a redeveloped building, but a redeveloped building enables dedicated spaces to be created for partner organisations to embed themselves in the leisure centre and fully-integrate with the customers.

Financial modelling

3.15 Other local authorities have undertaken similar schemes in recent years. Some examples are included as appendix 4, however these were all completed pre-Covid. The table below shows the increases in customers and members that have been achieved by other local authorities after redeveloping a leisure centre. The increased figures in table 3 represent positive outcomes in social terms, with more people visiting the new centres more often, and they also provide the revenue base that supports capital borrowing. (“Not known” is given where an information point was not available at the time of writing)

New leisure centre	**KPI measure**	**Pre-development**	**Post-development**
Maidstone Leisure Centre (current figures)	Throughput	800,000	
	Health and fitness members	2,272	
	Swim lesson customers	768	
	Revenue	£3.2m	

Dover District Leisure Centre	Throughput	168,000	540,000
	Health and fitness members	780	4,300 & 800 swim only
	Swim lesson customers	700	1,400
	Revenue	Not known	Not known
Camberley Arena (estimates after being open for 6 months)	Throughput	Not known	Not known
	Health and fitness members	3,018	3,900
	Swim lesson customers	630	830
	Revenue	100%	193%
Hart Leisure Centre	Throughput	360,000	720,000
	Health and fitness members	2,647	4,418
	Swim lesson customers	1,863	2,089
	Revenue	Not known	Not known
Harrow Lodge Leisure Centre	Throughput	46,836	62,509
	Health and fitness members	4,333	5,253
	Swim lesson customers	Not known	Not known
	Revenue	100%	136%
Moberley Leisure Centre	Throughput	249,075	581,731
	Health and fitness members	985	3,980
	Swim lesson customers	Not known	Not known
	Revenue	100%	163%
New Alton Leisure Centre	Throughput	180,866	494,499
	Health and fitness members	1,896	3,004
	Swim lesson customers	Not known	Not known
	Revenue	100%	140%
Wyre Forest Glades	Throughput	414,603	531,607
	Health and fitness members	1,787	3,513

Leisure Centre	Swim lesson customers	Not known	Not known
	Revenue	100%	138%

Table 3 showing comparative KPI impacts of redeveloped leisure centres

3.16 The increased profitability of redeveloped centres provides a contract fee in the region of £1million that the local authority can then use to pay back capital borrowing. The exact figure will depend on the facility mix of the centre, and current market prices at the time of tendering, but multiple recent examples have generated contract fees of this size payable to the local authority. Once built, the ongoing repairs and maintenance obligations of a new leisure centre can be passed to the operator, meaning the Council has no annual repairs costs or commitments and the entire fee the Council receives can be used to repay capital. Providing the building is adequately repaired and maintained, the Council can expect the contract payments to be in the same region for the duration of the capital repayment period.

3.17 A repeat option is likely to result in increased costs for the Council as the risks associated with managing the current building increase. The refurbishment option and the redevelopment option will reduce future risks and the environmental, social and financial factors can be addressed through capital investment into the centre.

3.18 The current contract figures were set in 2009 and have not been subject to inflation for 12 years. To repeat the 2009 option today the Council would need to invest £12million over 15 years at a nett annual cost of £633,000. This figure, based on inflation alone, would give cosmetic improvements and a 15-year repairs budget but it does not include the building being 15 years older than it was in 2009.

3.19 To make meaningful cost comparisons between the repeat, the refurbishment and the redevelopment options capital schemes with revenue projections will be needed. Some of this work has been completed as part of the Sport England SOPG work, but a refurbishment scheme for the leisure centre has not yet been completed so a comparison is not possible.

3.20 What is known is that the construction of a new building is currently priced at £3,675 per m2, valuing the new construction cost of a new leisure centre at £32m. This is subject to a final design and a final location and does not include fees and contingencies, meaning the total price will be closer to £40m. A refurbishment of the whole of Maidstone Leisure Centre, valued at an average price of £2,670 per m2 will cost approximately £35.7m and again that figure does not include fees and contingencies.

3.21 A new build scheme is eligible for grant funding from Sport England and it can also be submitted as a bid to the Levelling Up Fund in spring 2022. A refurbishment scheme is unlikely to be eligible for grant funding from Sport England. However, with a refurbishment the Council has the ability to set a budget and deliver improvements to that budget.

3.22 In general terms the refurbishment option could range from cosmetic works to structural changes and plant upgrades. This project will benefit from an investigative survey of the existing building, its structure and fabric, the condition of its plant and filtration systems. Quotations are being sought for this so that this information can be presented to members at a future meeting. Also required is a refurbishment design showing what is possible with the current floorplans and layouts of Maidstone Leisure Centre. With these two pieces of work more robust cost comparisons can be made between:

- the repeat option, using 2021 prices,
- the refurbishment option, using a refurbishment design and cost plan to know how value for money can be achieved and how social and environmental outcomes can be achieved
- the redevelopment option, using a new design to deliver social, environmental and financial outcomes.

Business plan models can also be presented for all three options.

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4. OPTIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 This report is presented for discussion and at this stage there is no preferred option or reasons for recommendation.

4.2 Members are invited to discuss the merits of the repeat, refurbishment and redevelop options and the advantages and disadvantages of the three options are summarised in the table below

Option	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
Repeat	**Social** • No disruption for users as service will continue during the contract changeover period **Environmental** • Current building continues to be used • No construction work at the leisure centre/Mote Park location **Financial** • No capital investment required by the Council	**Social** • Customer satisfaction with the building will decrease and user experiences will deteriorate • Customer numbers likely to fall • Accessibility will continue to be below modern standards • Building will still be uninviting from the outside • Co-locating other services to the building will continue to be a challenge **Environmental** • Building will continue to be inefficient in its consumption of energy and heat • Building will not be making a positive contribution to the Council's carbon net zero target

		• Building will continue to be unsympathetic to the natural park setting **Financial** • Ageing plant is an operational and financial risk because repairs can be problematic • Operating the old plant is labour intensive and a very manual process • Attracting new users to the centre will become harder • Customer confidence in the building will impact directly on operational revenues • Ongoing repairs and maintenance will not address the changes that would make the most difference • Operators will price bids accordingly and either decline to take on the risk of managing old plant or will insist on the council retaining these risks in the contract terms
Refurbish	**Social** • Likely to generate a short-term increase in usage • Existing customer base is retained • New customers can be attracted by a fresh look and feel • With careful programming can ensure parts of the building are kept open at various times during the construction phases **Environmental** • Can address the energy consumption rating of the building and the plant • Grant funding could be available for some decarbonising measures • Can improve the appeal of the external look of the building if works are extensive • Built on existing footprint – low impact on other areas in the park **Financial**	**Social** • Significant capital needs to be spent on back of house i.e. plant and equipment, roof replacement; whilst this investment is a priority, it will not add to the customer experience of using the facility • Limited scope to change configuration of building and layout • Limited scope to alter facility mix to meet changing customer needs • Perception of 'no change' from residents • No direct link to adjacent Mote Park and outdoor sports • Previous refurbishments resulted in short term rather than long term increase in usage • Will require closures to parts of the building during the construction phase – loss of custom and sporting participation during this time • Co-locating of health services to the building will be harder

	• Can focus resources on the areas that need it most • Can be done on varying scales of work from a cosmetic refurbishment to a structural remodelling of the building and the level of work can be aligned to the available capital resources and a set budget	to accommodate in the existing building **Environmental** • Continued high carbon emissions due to age and inefficient design of building **Financial** • Management contract is likely to be less attractive to leisure operators and they will cost for risk in managing an ageing building. • Closures during the construction period will have financial impacts
Redevelop	**Social** • Modern facilities in a building with modern accessibility specification makes it easier to cater for all user groups in the same spaces • Efficient design of facility with facility mix that meets the current and future needs of the Borough • Improved layout with better connections and circulation spaces • Better and more comfortable viewing areas for parents and spectators • Increase in customer appeal • Increase in number of centre users and improved health outcomes of residents • Opportunity to target hard to reach groups through hub approach to delivery. • Increased health outcomes in close proximity to the most deprived wards • Increased opportunity for complementary co-located community facilities providing integrated health and physical activity offer • Greater connection with the leisure centre via cycling/walking/running routes **Environmental** • Ability to take full advantage of location and re-orientate	**Social** • Hub will only work if joined up working/commitment of key partners • Rural provision would need to operate as complimentary to the main physical activity hub. Smaller, informal provision in the rural areas may not be attractive to an external operator • Construction will need careful management to avoid impacting on the historic park • Decision will be required on the layout and uses of Mote Hall **Environmental** • Existing building will need to be demolished in a sustainable way so that materials are recycled or re-used on site • Current leisure centre footprint will need to be planned carefully to complement new building and historic park setting. **Financial** • Will require significant capital investment and a long payback period

	building to integrate with park and neighbouring facilities e.g. direct link to Outdoor Adventure, access to café in entrance without entering facility, view out to park etc. • Options to build adjacent to the current building and improve the overall look and feel of the external areas of the centre and links to Mote Park • Modern building will make considerable contributions to the Council's carbon net zero targets • Grant funding could be available for some decarbonising measures • More efficient design creates a building approximately 66% of the size of the current centre • Opportunities to develop an exemplar facility in carbon emissions terms. **Financial** • Increase usage generates increased revenues • A new leisure facility will be very attractive to leisure facility operators and proposals could be incorporated into new leisure contract procurement process, ensuring better financial return to the Council • Operator will take on the repairs and maintenance obligations in a new centre • Opportunity to review target market and review position in the marketplace. • More cost-effective long term than adding to old facility structure. • Opportunities for external grant funding from Sport England and Levelling Up Fund • Removes financial risks from the Council's risk register	

Table 4. summary of advantages and disadvantages for the repeat, refurbishment and redevelop options

5. RISK

5.1 No capital investment in the leisure centre will result in the building ageing further still and the impacts of this becoming realised.

5.2 The costs of this can be measured in financial, social and environmental terms. Currently the council's risk matrix places these risks as red.

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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 SOPG report as referenced in paragraph 2.1 and available as appendix 1 has included consultation with (in no particular order):

- Sport England
- Kent Amateur Swimming Association
- MBC Planning department
- MBC Arts and Culture Officer
- MBC Parks and Open Spaces Manager
- Mote Park Cricket Club
- Maidstone Rugby Football Club
- The Mote Squash Club
- Maidstone Volleyball Club
- WingChun Maidstone
- Krav Maga BKMA
- Maidstone Rollerdance Club
- Dharma Gym
- Mote Park Watersports Centre
- Maidstone Community Mental Health Team
- Maidstone Area Arts Partnership
- Involve Kent
- Infozone Youth Hub
- Younger People With Dementia – Maidstone Community Support Centre
- Maidstone Youth Forum
- Action with Communities – Rural Kent
- Maidstone Disability Focus Group
- Kent Physical Disability Forum
- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust – Adult Mental Health
- Kent and Medway CCG
- CAB
- Maidstone South and Central PCNs (West Kent Primary Care)
- Swale Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Medway Council
- Active Kent – KCC
- Serco Leisure
- Maidstone YMCA
- Badminton England

6.2 Consultation was sought with the following organisations but it was not possible to speak with them on this occasion:
- Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club
- Maidstone Swimming Club
- Maidstone Disabled Swim Club
- Maidstone Scuba Club
- Blue Ocean Diving
- Age UK Maidstone
- Kent Active Retirement Associations
- Maidstone Older People's Forum
- Maidstone U3A
- Ashford Borough Council

6.3 Further consultation work will continue as per recommendation 3 in this report.

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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Additional reports and further information will be brought to future meeting of this committee. They will include:

- Condition survey of the building
- Condition survey of the M&E
- Condition survey of the pool plant and filtration systems
- A best-value refurbishment development scheme to allow comparisons with the repeat and redevelop options
- Revenue modelling for the refurbishment scheme and the redevelopment scheme

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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Maidstone Sport England SOPG Report
- Appendix 2a - c: Maidstone Leisure Centre development locations
- Appendix 3: Maidstone Leisure Centre option 4 - indicative site plan
- Appendix 4a - d: Leisure centre development case studies

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- *Making Maidstone More Active Update* Report – Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee, 16 March 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Maidstone is situated in the heart of Kent, strategically located between the Channel Tunnel and London, with direct connections via the M20 and M2 motorways. Approximately 70% of its 171,800 population[1] lives in the urban area to the northwest of the borough, with Maidstone providing a strong commercial centre and one of the largest retail centres in the south-east.

1.2 According to the Government's 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Maidstone is a comparatively affluent area. However, there are pockets of high deprivation. The urban area includes the neighbourhoods of Park Wood, High Street, Shepway North and Shepway South. All these areas are in need of regeneration and fall within the 20% most deprived in the Country.

1.3 The Borough has an aging demographic, high levels of child and adult obesity, and low participation rates, particularly in areas of high deprivation.

1.4 Maidstone Leisure Centre is currently the main leisure centre for the borough and is located within close proximity of the above areas of deprivation. The leisure centre is also located adjacent to Mote Park, ''the Jewel in Maidstone's Crown''. This is a Grade II listed 450 acre park which receives over 1 million visitors each year and is one of the UK's 10 favourite parks (People's Choice Awards). The park provides 4 play areas, 6 miles of footpaths, 5 football and rugby pitches, a 5k walking/running route, dementia walk, BMX track, model railway, café, lake offering watersports, picnic area, arboretum and 3 car parks.

1.5 Mote Park Cricket Ground is also located adjacent to the park and leisure centre. The land is owned by The Mote Cricket Club and the pavilion is shared with Maidstone Rugby Club. Maidstone Squash Club (private members club) is also situated within the grounds of the Cricket Club.

1.6 The revised Local Development Plan is currently under development. As part of the Infrastructure Development Plan the need for new leisure facilities in and around Maidstone is identified:

Table 1.1: Infrastructure Development Plan – leisure requirements

Sports and leisure facilities	
Lead organisation(s)	• Maidstone Borough Council • Private health and fitness providers
Main sources of information	• Maidstone Economic Development Needs Study 2020 • Maidstone Playing Pitch Strategy 2020 • Maidstone Sports facility Strategy 2020

[1] Source: ONS mid-year estimates 2019

Sports and leisure facilities	
Existing provision	Mote Park Leisure Centre is the local authority leisure centre and it contains swimming facilities; sports halls; gymnasium; and a large soft play area. According to Sport England/Active Places data, there are 16 registered health and fitness suites in Maidstone, with 1,144 fitness stations in total. Four of these facilities are for private use only, one facility is 'pay and play' and the remaining 11 are open for the public to register as members.
Future requirements	An MBC study suggests that a new leisure centre is required in the borough to accommodate the needs of a growing population. This will need to be supported by a smaller satellite facility. Local Plan Review evidence suggests there is scope for 4 medium sized gyms (up to 50 stations) across the borough by 2042, based on population growth.
Funding sources	• MBC Capital programme; • Developer contributions (CIL) • Potential bid to Sport England • Potential bid to NGB capital funds, depending on facility mix
Key issues (incl. DtC)	The current contract for the operators of Mote Park Leisure Centre comes to an end in 2024. Land needs to be identified for the smaller satellite leisure centre to supplement a regenerated Mote Park.

1.7 In the adopted Local Plan 2011-2031, the Borough's objectively assessed housing need was based on 883 dwellings per annum (dpa) or 17,660 dwellings over the plan period (2011-31). The Local Plan Review extends the Plan Period to 2037 and covers the period 2022-2037. The corresponding housing need figure for the Borough is 1,157 dwellings per annum, which equates to approximately 17,355 dwellings over the plan period (to 2037).2

1.8 To meet the housing and other needs identified the Council has decided to pursue a spatial strategy that includes the provision of Garden Communities. These are either garden villages (developments of 1,500 to 10,000 residential units) or garden towns (developments of 10,000 residential units plus).3 In 2019 the Council invited proposals for garden communities within the Borough. In response it received 7 proposals across the Borough. These were then assessed and two have been chosen for inclusion in the spatial strategy. These are Lidsing and Heathlands Garden Communities.

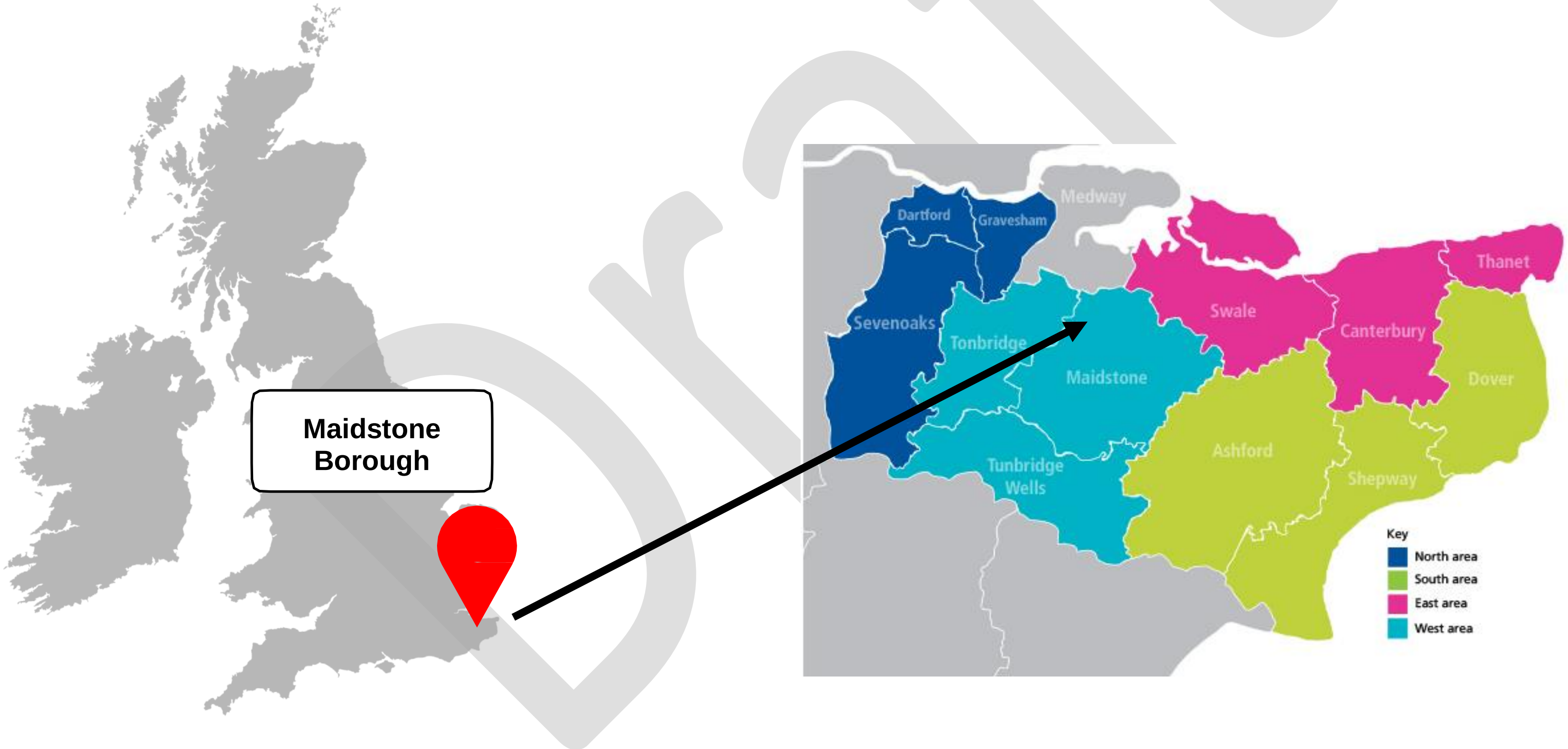
1.9 Lidsing Garden Community is a mixed community of 2,000 residential units and 2,000 jobs promoted by 1 major landowner. It is situated in the north of the Borough adjacent to the boundary with Medway Council. Access to the site can be gained from the strategic road network via the M2 junction 4.

[2] Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment

1.10 The site is to be delivered over a 15 year period starting in 2027. This community will look towards Maidstone or even Gillingham for its community facilities and services.

1.11 Heathlands Garden Community is a mixed community of 5,000 residential units and 5,000 jobs promoted jointly by Homes England and Maidstone Borough Council. The site is between the villages of Lenham in Maidstone Borough and Charing in Ashford Borough, but the site is within Maidstone borough's administrative boundary. The site has vehicular access to the A20 corridor and potential for a new rail station on the South-eastern Maidstone Line between Ashford and Maidstone. The site is to be delivered over a 25year period starting in 2030. The need for investment in leisure facilities is included in the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) so will be reflected in the Local Plan.

Location



The Current Picture

1.12 Maidstone Leisure Centre is owned by MBC and leased to Maidstone Leisure Trust (MLT) along with a management contract and specification. MLT employs Serco Leisure Ltd (Serco) as its managing agent. The 15 year contract is due to expire in August 2024. In 2017, a deed of variation was signed to include the operation of Outdoor Adventure, an outdoor leisure facility in the neighbouring Mote Park, located approximately 200m from the leisure centre. This contract is co-terminus with the leisure centre contract.

1.13 The leisure centre contract includes a subsidy of £200,000 per annum paid by Serco to MBC on a monthly basis. MBC makes monthly payments totalling £624,000 per annum into a lifecycle budget which Serco uses for the ongoing repair and maintenance of the leisure centre building. The sum is fixed over the life of the contract and was arranged through Serco PAISA and operates on a similar basis to a financial loan. The £624,000 are the annual loan repayments which total approximately £9m over the life of the contract including inflation. The maintenance fund available over that period is around £7.2m. In addition, a utilities cost adjustment arrangement is built into the contract which requires the Council to pay any increase in utilities over and above the baseline Utility Tariff as agreed in June 2008. The annual net cost to MBC for Maidstone Leisure Centre is approximately £450,000 per annum.

1.14 Maidstone Leisure Centre is a very popular and well used facility. The original pool was built in the 1960’s and has been refurbished and extended over the years with the sports hall, gym and leisure water incorporated into the overall design during the 1990’s. The facility is beginning to look tired and is showing its age. No work has been carried out to the roof for at least 5 years and its replacement would be a significant cost within any future refurbishment scheme.

1.15 The leisure centre is also inefficiently designed, having been added to on a piecemeal basis over the years. There are lots of corridors and the orientation of the building is such that it does not take advantage of the views of the adjacent parkland, nor the opportunity of accessing the leisure centre facilities from Mote Park itself. The leisure centre entrance faces away from the Park.

1.16 There is a strong swim club and lesson programme (2,000 members pre-Covid) at Maidstone Leisure Centre but lack of changing space for swimmers. There is also a diving section to the swim club which is popular. The diving tank is used during club hours and used by the general public during weekends and holidays. Scuba diving also takes place in the diving tank.

1.17 There is a busy gym and group exercise programme but this has been impacted by competition from budget gyms setting up locally. Most are located in the town centre. The existing gyms lacks any views out over the adjoining parkland.

1.18 The 6 court sports hall has been converted into a concert venue with retractable seating. The arrangement satisfies nobody as its dual purpose restricts the number of regular events that can be held on site to make it financially viable as a concert venue. It also restricts use of the sports hall by local sports clubs at weekends.

1.19 The café is poorly located within the main leisure pool hall, providing uncomfortable environmental conditions for customers.

1.20 Usage of the soft play area has tailed off in recent years due to the age and condition of the equipment. The soft play is also located within the main leisure pool hall and therefore there are uncomfortable environmental conditions for those using the equipment.

1.21 There is a lack of cohesion/integration between Maidstone Leisure Centre, and the neighbouring Mote Park, Mote Cricket, Rugby and Squash Clubs and Maidstone Indoor Bowls Club. The leisure centre’s existing design does not blend in with its surrounding natural environment and the entrance faces away from the park.

1.22 The Mote Cricket Club is currently seeking to sell part of its site to fund the provision of a new pavilion.

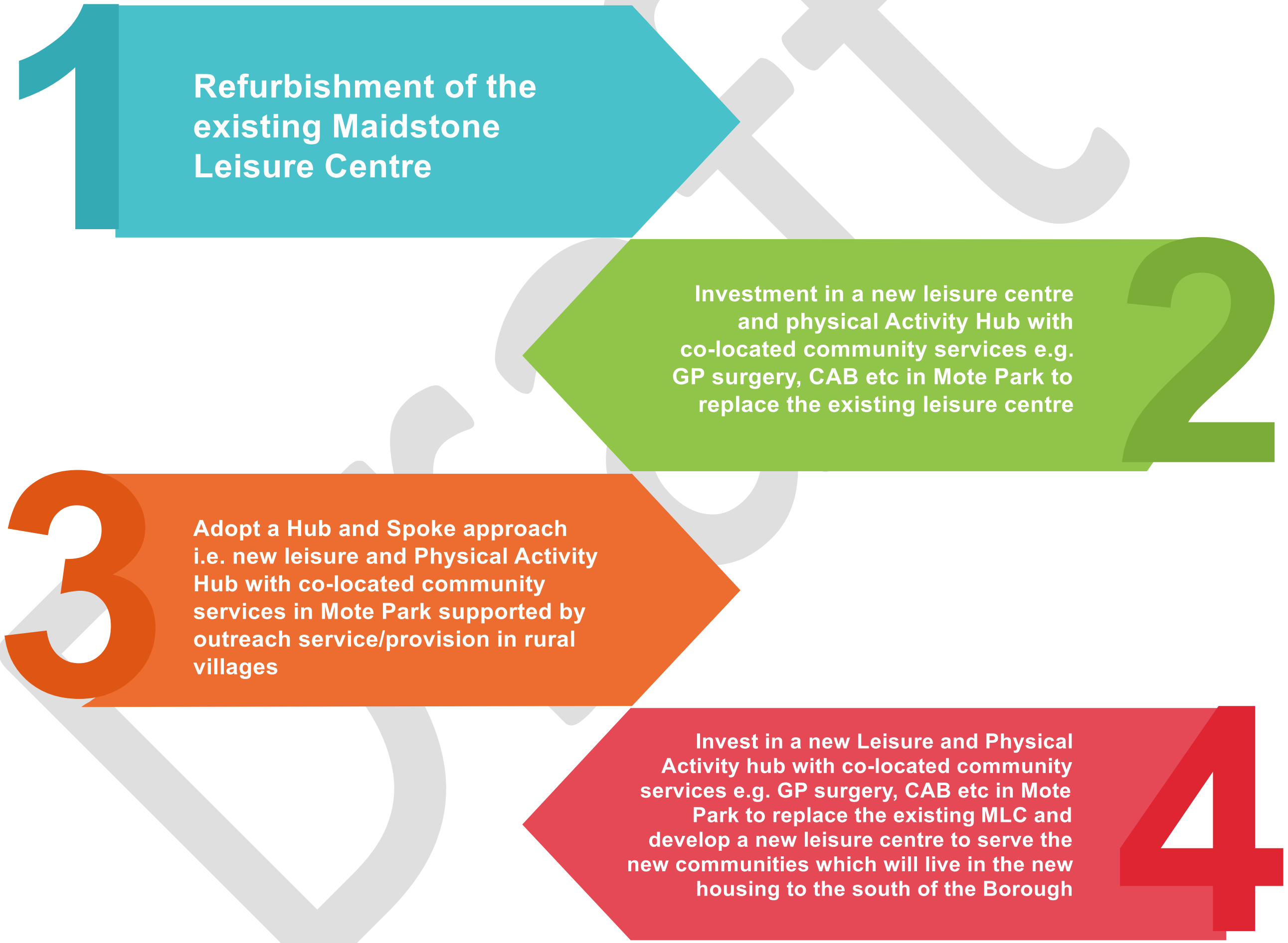
1.23 Maidstone Leisure Centre therefore sits in a very strategic position, as an integral part of an existing hub of indoor and outdoor leisure provision in the Borough, located geographically close to the Borough’s areas of highest deprivation and inactivity.

1.24 MBC is also reviewing its Local Plan which was adopted in 2018. Up to 1,200 new homes will be provided leading to significant population growth through to 2037. This housing development will be predominantly in the south of the borough. In Tunbridge Wells, to the southwest of Maidstone, new housing development and leisure facilities in Paddock Wood are being proposed. It is anticipated that residents living in the south of Maidstone borough will be served by these new leisure facilities.

1.25 MBC’s strategies and policies clearly demonstrate a commitment to improving physical health and wellbeing of its residents, including access to high quality parks and open spaces, improving active travel and addressing and reducing health inequalities. As a minimum, the Council wishes to see accessible community sport and leisure facilities, places and spaces for swimming, fitness, sports hall and sports activities available to all residents. This includes both formal and informal spaces, for example community halls, in which to play sport and be physically active, as well as improved access to green spaces.

1.26 Sport England data has highlighted the negative impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on both the physical and mental wellbeing of the nation and MBC recognises the important role that community sport and leisure facilities, spaces and places will play in addressing the needs of its residents now and in the future.

1.27 Set within this context, and given the need to provide for new communities on the basis of MBC's shared outcomes for physical activity, the following options are to be considered as part of this report:



Our Vision for Change

1.28 MBC's Vision for Change and the objectives for the creation of a new leisure and physical activity hub in Mote Park supported by outreach service/provision in rural areas:

Making Maidstone healthier	Create an integrated indoor and outdoor active environment	Encourage, support and facilitate active lifestyles	Create spaces and activities that promote positive mental wellbeing	Improve quality to create modern, sustainable spaces within communities
Support reduction in health inequalities	Provision of accessible and inclusive activities for all residents	Increase life opportunities at all stages	Contribute to a reduction in obesity levels	Contribute towards an increase in levels of physical activity
Reduce levels of social isolation amongst old and young	Develop community capacity, capability and resilience	Support economic regeneration and development of a vibrant Borough	Provide new places for people to be more active in a range of accessible indoor and outdoor spaces	Work with other providers and partners to achieve the above objectives

2. Our Vision and Shared Local Strategic Outcomes

2.1. Our overall Vision and Priority Outcome:

Maidstone will be a district where healthier, active lifestyles are encouraged, supported and facilitated for everyone

2.2. Four core principles underpin the delivery of this Vision:

Support for the creation of a high quality and sustainable indoor leisure facility mix, which provides accessible and inclusive activities for all Maidstone residents leading to increased participation and active lifestyles, thereby meeting community need;

Recognising the importance of leisure facilities as relevant community spaces, accessible to all and offering opportunities for the delivery of a wide range of activities, services, support and entertainment to local communities and people;

Recognise the importance of accessible informal indoor and outdoor community spaces and activities in addressing both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of local residents; and

Recognise the importance of active travel in contributing towards the physical and mental health and wellbeing of local residents.

Our Outcomes Framework

Table 1.1 Planned Outcomes

Planned Outcomes	How will we know that outcomes are being achieved?	How the new leisure and physical activity hub in Mote Park will contribute to these outcomes?
Increase levels of physical activity across the Borough	• More young people and older people from harder to reach groups taking part in physical activity.	A new leisure and physical activity hub in Mote Park will:

Planned Outcomes	How will we know that outcomes are being achieved?	How the new leisure and physical activity hub in Mote Park will contribute to these outcomes?
Achieve sustainable, positive health outcomes for young and older people living in Maidstone through targeted activities **Reduce social isolation** **Improve quality of life and social outcomes** **Address priority health issues e.g., obesity, circulatory diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases, hypertension, dementia and mental health issues** **Through sport and physical activity, help children and young people obtain a broad range of skills and capabilities to achieve and succeed** **Provide opportunities to participate, progress and achieve in sport** **Utilise technology to engage with communities e.g. MBC website, 'Making Maidstone More Active', social media** **Support local community groups to grow and sustain their sport and physical activity provision** **Support positive activity programmes with local sports clubs, voluntary organisations and local housing associations to address changing health needs across the District**	• Maintain and look for opportunities to improve participation in physical activity amongst this target audience • Increased number of people walking and cycling as part of everyday life • A locality based social prescribing offer driven by and for local people • Improved individual engagement with the exercise referral scheme • Reduction in physical and mental health inequalities in the borough • Contribution to an increased healthy life expectancy • Continued reduction in levels of childhood and adult obesity • Co-location of a range of physical activities and wider community focussed health services • Increased engagement with old people and young people • Contribution to climate change through reduction in carbon emissions • Better co-ordination and utilisation of existing providers to deliver outreach health and physical activity • Activity programmes delivered that connect urban and rural areas into physical activity using existing infrastructure and the great outdoors	• Increase ability to incorporate physical activity into everyday life • Increase access to daytime physical activity • Provide opportunities to socialise and integrate through physical activity • Provide formal/conventional water space which will better cater for lane swimming which is better for exercise and overall health and wellbeing, and swim lessons, encouraging children and young people to learn a life skill and enjoy an active lifestyle from a young age. • Improved disabled access will encourage greater participation • A hub design concept will facilitate joined up working between leisure and health providers and ease of use for residents • A new design which will create an integrated indoor and outdoor active environment, linking with the Mote Park and adjacent sports clubs • Increased employment opportunities and apprenticeships • Increased skills through sports coaching/lesson programmes provided by leisure operator, local clubs and NGBs • Sustainable facility provision (operational and financial) • The existing centre has a very large carbon footprint. Typically, a leisure centre contributes between 10% and 40% of an authority's overall emissions, depending on the age of the portfolio stock. A new facility will significantly reduce this and the hub concept will improve efficiency through shared plant, and passive design principles etc.

Planned Outcomes	How will we know that outcomes are being achieved?	How the new leisure and physical activity hub in Mote Park will contribute to these outcomes?
Work with local providers and partners to deliver a coordinated approach to sport and physical activities in rural areas e.g. Active Kent, MLT, Leisure Operators, Voluntary Sports and Social Clubs/organisations etc		• Co-ordinated delivery of outreach programme of activities in rural areas as part of a future leisure facility contract to complement existing provision • Improvements to the mental health of residents • Increased opportunities for active travel (walking and cycling) due to central location and by linking to/extending existing cycle/walking routes • Development of separate concert venue at alternative location to increase availability of community accessible sports hall space for sports club and casual use at weekends
Investment in modern GP surgeries and local health hubs in Maidstone		
Provision of additional community accessible 'pay and play' swimming pool space and sports hall space to address future demand		
Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure to support an active lifestyle		

Our Wider Strategic Outcomes

2.3. There are a number of wider strategic outcomes to which physical activity can contribute to the Borough; these are summarised below in relation to the policy/strategy in which they are identified.

Maidstone Borough Council Strategic Plan (2019 – 2045)

Vision: Maidstone: a vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential.

2.4. MBC's Strategic Plan (2021 Refresh) identifies the following key priorities in helping achieve the above vision:

- **Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure**
- **Safe, clean and green Maidstone**
- **Homes and communities**
- **A thriving place**

2.5. Addressing and reducing health inequalities is seen as a cross-cutting objective across all 4 key priorities.

2.6. The Strategy seeks to deliver the following key shared outcomes by 2045 in relation to sport and physical activity:

- **Ensuring that sufficient infrastructure is planned to meet the demands of growth**
- **An environmentally attractive and sustainable borough**
- **Everyone has access to high quality parks and open spaces**
- **A diverse range of community activities is encouraged**
- **Community facilities and services are in the right place at the right time to support communities**
- **A vibrant leisure and cultural offer, enjoyed by residents and attractive to visitors**
- **Our towns and villages are fit for the future**

Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted 2017)

2.7. MBC's Local Plan policy DM (Community Facilities) ensures that any new residential development which generates the need for or for which spare capacity in such facilities does not exist, will not be permitted unless the provision of new, extended or improved facilities (or a contribution towards such provision) is secured as appropriate by planning conditions, through legal agreements, or through the Community Infrastructure Levy. Proposals which would lead to a loss of community facilities will not be permitted unless demand within the locality no longer exists or a replacement facility acceptable to the council is provided. The same policy seeks to ensure, where appropriate, that providers of education facilities make provision for dual use of facilities in the design of new schools and will encourage the dual use of education facilities (new and existing) for recreation and other purposes.

MBC Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2016

2.8. The Strategy identifies and prioritises where green and blue infrastructure interventions will have the most impact on achieving objectives which include mitigating and adapting to climate change, integrating sustainable movement and access for all, and providing opportunities for sport, recreation, quiet enjoyment and health.

2.9. Maidstone urban area is seen as a priority area for improvement due to the high population levels, levels of multiple deprivation and need to mitigate the effects of air pollution through tree planting and encouraging active and sustainable travel.

Maidstone Sports Facility Strategy 2019

2.10. MBC's Sports Facility Strategy 2019 highlights that participation rates in Maidstone have fallen recently to lower than the wider geographical averages. There are significant differences in sports participation between the urban (where rates are lower) and rural (where rates are higher) parts of the borough, which will impact upon demand patterns. It is worth noting that this finding contradicts the findings from the MBC 'Making Maidstone More Active' survey 2019 which found that in Urban Wards there was a greater percentage of people achieving the recommended minimum amount of physical activity or more, compared to those living in Rural Wards.

2.11. The following key issues and recommendations were identified in the Strategy:

- **Facility Needs Identified**

  - In terms of sports hall provision, there are nine community-accessible sports halls in Maidstone, plus one other facility without public access. There is no current spare peak time sports hall capacity. Additional demand by 2031 will require the equivalent of 1.6 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access. All the main populated areas of the borough are within 15-minutes driving time of a community-accessible sports hall with 'pay-and-play' access. Seven of the nine sports halls in the borough are on school sites, with limited midweek daytime access and only four halls offer regular weekend availability. None of the school facilities has secured community use.

- There are nine swimming pools at five sites with community use in Maidstone. Additional demand by 2031 will amount to the equivalent of one 25m x 4-lane pool with full community access. Only the Maidstone Leisure Centre pools (3 plus some leisure water) offer ‘pay-and-play’ public access in the borough, with the remaining facilities accessible on a membership only basis.
- There are 15 publicly accessible health and fitness facilities in Maidstone. Additional demand by 2031 will amount to the equivalent of an extra 187 equipment stations.

- **Recommendations**

- It is recommended that existing planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites
- Efforts are made to secure formal Community Use Agreements at existing education sports facilities
- Some of the current and future demand for sports facilities in Maidstone can be accommodated through enhancements to existing facilities.
- Maidstone Leisure Centre is the major community sports facility in the borough, of key strategic significance for swimming, but also ‘pay-and-play’ health and fitness provision. By 2031, the Centre will have reached the end of its planned lifespan. The current management contract with the Maidstone Leisure Trust expires in 2024, which will give the Council an important opportunity to review the scale and location of the facilities mix provided, to determine whether the current configuration is the most appropriate to deliver community leisure needs over the next few decades. The review should examine whether:

(a) The current scale and configuration of swimming facilities is appropriate to current and future needs and if not, what alternatives should be provided.
(b) Other facilities should be considered for inclusion in a new or refurbished leisure centre.
(c) Provision of community sports facilities at the current site in the centre of the borough is the most appropriate way to meet current and future needs, compared with a more dispersed model of provision.
(d) The Council is the most appropriate provider of the facilities or whether other providers such as the education and/or commercial sectors could meet all identified needs.

2.12. A draft update of the above strategy was prepared in 2020 to reflect increased housing needs and the rolling forward of the end date of the Local Plan review to 2037. The recommendations have yet to receive Member approval, however the following key changes in terms of leisure facility provision needs are identified:

- **The equivalent of two 4-badminton court-sized sports halls with full community access**
- **The equivalent of one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access**
- **230 health and fitness equipment stations**
- **Additional specialist gymnastics facilities**

Maidstone Collaborative Working Agreements

2.13. The Maidstone Collaborative Working Agreements are good examples of formalised joint working agreements between the Council's Public Health Team and Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces, and Strategic Planning to seek ways of working together to address Public Health priorities and key health inequalities across the Borough. The Council's Strategic Plan acknowledges that health inequalities is a cross cutting objective and the responsibility of all departments of the Council.

2.14. With regards to the Leisure Team, key actions include:

- **The inclusion of Public Health KPI’s in future leisure contracts**
- **Leisure services are delivered in a way that enables and encourages positive behavioural change**
- **Ensure that the charging policy is attractive to key target groups**
- **Market, target and engage with people who attend One You Kent programmes, individuals referred with a health condition by their GP/health professional, individuals on benefits, people with a disability including long term conditions, carers - families and children**
- **Offer package of lifestyle support and advice for clients (Mytime Active and MLC) with a focus on behaviour change**
- **Offer Healthier Catering options including vending machines**
- **Mytime Active and MLC to develop working partnerships with the NHS including GPs, Maidstone Hospital and the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group focusing on priorities with the prevention workstream of the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships. Offer a suite of services for individuals with health conditions working alongside the NHS to develop appropriate referral pathways.**

2.15. Mytime Active is the golf contractor at Cobtree Manor Park golf course in Maidstone. This 20 year management contract commenced in 2017.

2.16. Key actions relating to the Parks and Open Spaces Team include:

Design, maintenance and activities within the Parks and Green Spaces of Maidstone should encourage physical activity appropriate for all sections of the population. They should also create restorative spaces and activities that promote positive mental wellbeing. The focus will be on inactive people, those living in areas of deprivation (particularly Shepway South, Park Wood and High Street), those with a disability including long term conditions etc

Explore investment not just in the physical infrastructure and maintenance of Parks and Greens spaces but also in activities that animate, activate green spaces and encourage people to use them

Develop links with the NHS and in particular Social Prescribing (Involve Kent). Actively promote 'Green Prescription' and the activities encouraging positive physical and mental wellbeing which take place in MBC Green Spaces including development and support of volunteering and Friends of Groups.

Create an Activity Hub in Senacre. Improve access to site and include sophisticated outdoor gym equipment and 1km track.

Develop Maidstone Leisure Centre as a hub in Mote Park for physical activity and exercise. Introduce a more joined up approach to leisure provision in Mote Park including MLC, the Water sports Centre and Outdoor Adventure this may include memberships for target groups.

Mark out areas for games in parks over the summer months to encourage outdoor play

Consider installing table tennis/games equipment in Parks

Cycling and Walking

2.17. The borough has an existing network of walking and cycling routes as well as the National Trails of the North Downs Way and the Greensand Way, which pass through the Borough, and various promoted routes e.g. Medway Valley, Medway Towpath. However, the cycle routes linking schools, colleges, employment and retail areas are limited and disjointed with few off road options and a lack of secure parking at key destinations.

2.18. Participation levels in walking and cycling within the borough is lower than the national and regional averages.[4] However, participation in walking and cycling has increased over recent years.

2.19. The borough's existing cycle network links the town centre to most suburban areas and community facilities, including several schools, Maidstone East Railway Station and Mote Park. National Cycle Network route 17 provides an 11 mile leisure/commuter link between Maidstone and Rochester. Via Mote Park, Weavering Street and Hockers Lane, route 17 connects to the Pilgrims Cycle Trial at Detling in the North Downs.

2.20. In October 2020, Maidstone Borough Council declared a biodiversity and climate emergency. It agreed the following key actions in relation to walking and cycling for residents:

Ensure policies encourage and enable development proposals which give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with its surrounding areas; and second to facilitating high quality public transport connectivity.

Work with KCC to develop Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy, and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, as part of the Local Plan review to promote and support a modal shift to walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicles.

Produce a business case for the introduction of a workplace parking levy to fund active travel or public transport.

MBC Local Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2020

2.21. There is a commitment in the Council's Strategic Plan to improving active travel within the Borough and his is reflected in the Local Plan and the Council's Local Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2020. For example, in Maidstone Town Centre it identifies cycle parking improvements, improved pedestrian linkages and accessibility and legibility, new sections and improvement of existing towpath, and a new footbridge provision to reduce traffic congestion within the town centre and introduce health benefits in terms of improved air quality and increased physical activity.

2.22. The Local Infrastructure Delivery Plan is in the process of being updated to focus on the strategic infrastructure required to support delivery of the development in the Maidstone Local Plan Review

[4] Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/walking-and-cycling-statistics-cw

Maidstone Walking and Cycling Strategy 2011 – 2031

2.23. The Maidstone Walking and Cycling Strategy identifies the improvements required to deliver a comprehensive and well-connected cycle network (rather than focusing in detail on pedestrian-only facilities), which will help to make both cycling and walking more attractive alternatives for journeys within the borough. The Strategy is aligned with the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the Integrated Transport Strategy and is supported by the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which promotes the use of urban green space and Public Rights of Way for active travel.

Vision: Walking and cycling become the natural choices for shorter journeys in Maidstone Borough – or as part of a longer journey – regardless of age, gender, fitness level or income.

2.24. The Strategy's focus is on the Maidstone Urban area. This is where most people live, where significant new development will take place in the coming years and where the infilling of gaps in cycle facilities will make the greatest contribution towards achieving the modal shift from private car journeys. However, there is also merit in developing longer distance cycle routes to encourage inter-urban travel and cycle tourism and so the identification of opportunities for improving cycle linkages into neighbouring authorities has been another focus of this Strategy. It is intended to complement the measures and interventions identified in the cycle strategies prepared by neighbouring authorities in conjunction with Kent County Council (KCC).

2.25. In terms of creating new cycle links, the Strategy refers to:

"Filling in of the gaps" to create a fully integrated urban cycle network, with radial routes joined across the town centre. Key destinations (e.g. schools, colleges, hospitals, shopping centres, visitor attractions) and new housing and employment sites will be integrated into the cycle network.

The creation of an orbital walking and cycling route around the Maidstone urban area, linking to the town centre via radial routes. This would be delivered through the designation of cycle routes along quiet lanes as well as the upgrading of existing footways alongside distributor roads and, where possible, footpath networks to provide cycle linkages.

The creation of cycle routes from rural service centres and smaller settlements to transport hubs (where new/improved cycle parking will be provided), along a mixture of quiet lanes and segregated shared use footways.

The creation of a rural circular cycle route (which could potentially be branded as a "Maidstone Ring" or similar) to encourage leisure cycling and exploration of the Borough's rural attractions. This would complement the existing NCR17/Pilgrims Cycle Trail and improve connectivity between rural service centres by cycle.

Summary

2.26. There are a number of clear priorities and strategic outcomes for improving community health and wellbeing in Maidstone as detailed in Table 1.1; the leisure facilities and services will contribute significantly towards the delivery of these outcomes and the attainment of the Vision for change in which '**Maidstone will be a district where healthier, active lifestyles are encouraged, supported and facilitated for everyone'.** Increasing access to good quality and accessible physical activity is at the heart of these shared outcomes and Vision for Change.

2.27. It is important to highlight that the majority of the SOPG research has been undertaken during the Covid pandemic. The data concerning Covid and its aftermath is telling us (Sports England Active Lives Report April 2021) that where inequalities previously existed, these have been exacerbated by the pandemic and investment to reduce health inequalities is needed more than ever. Whilst the majority of physically active adults in England managed to maintain their levels of physical activity, there was a marked increase in those who were inactive (less than 30 minutes exercise per week). This was particularly noticeable amongst women, young people aged 16 – 24, over 75's, disabled, and those from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds.

2.28. Participation in gym/fitness and swimming has begun to increase as leisure facilities have re-opened, and home based activity has decreased. Sport England will continue to monitor as the sector restrictions continue to ease using Active Lives survey data and Moving Communities Data supplied by leisure facility operators.

The Contribution of Sport and Physical Activity

2.29. Sport and physical activity can contribute towards:

Improved Health

Socialisation

Fun

Skill Development

Developing Confidence

Engagement

2.30. In Maidstone, we want to:

Break down	Break down barriers
Facilitate	Facilitate change
Support	Support individuals and families
Improve	Improve mental and physical wellbeing
Develop	Develop identity
Connect	Connect people and places

Partnerships Behind our Shared Outcomes

Maidstone Borough Council
Sport England
Kent County Council
Maidstone Leisure Trust
Serco Leisure
Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group
Involve Kent
Kent Sport
County ASA

3. Our Place Insight

Borough Demographics

3.1 The following summary of Maidstone's key demographic profile provides useful Insight as to factors influencing physical activity across the Borough:

The Maidstone population has a relatively elderly structure. The overall population in the Borough is projected to increase by 9% between 2021 and 3031, with the number of people aged 65+ projected to increase by 18%.

A high proportion of residents live in the town of Maidstone (63%) with the remainder living in the surrounding areas

Maidstone is relatively affluent with high levels of house ownership (32.9%) than the England average (30.6%). However, there are pockets of high deprivation, particularly in the urban centre

Park Wood, High Street and Shepway South wards are located in the top 10% most deprived LSOA's in England. These wards are located in the urban centre.

Approximately 70% of Maidstone residents live in the urban centre (153,143) with the remainder living in the extensive rural hinterland.

14.2% of children live in poverty in Maidstone, which is higher than the average for Kent (12.9%)

Levels of childhood obesity are rising in Maidstone under all National Child Measurement classifications (excess weight, overweight, obese and severely obese) between reception age and Year 6.

Activity levels of Maidstone children are variable, a higher proportion doing less than 30 minutes exercise a day compared to Kent and England averages. 19.1% of young people in Maidstone are fairly active, which is below the Kent and England averages. However, the number of Maidstone children who are active is 55.2% which is better than averages for the region and England.

High levels of adult obesity (61.4%) compared to the region (60.3%)

Participation rates amongst adults is poor with 28.9% doing less than 30 minutes activity per week, and only 9.7% doing 30 – 149 minutes and 61.4% doing more than 150 minutes per week; these results are worse than Kent and England averages. What is even more worrying is that 55% of those that do less than 30 minutes activity a week, do no activity at all.

There are higher participation rates in the more affluent rural parts of the Borough compared to urban areas where participation is lower. The lowest levels are in the south-east part of Maidstone town, within close proximity to Maidstone Leisure Centre.

There are high levels of car ownership and usage with 84% of Maidstone residents owning at least 1 car compared to 80% in Kent and 74% in England. Source: 2011 Census

Table 3.1:

Demographic Statistics	Maidstone	Kent	England
Population[5]			
Population 2021	176,013	1,609,182	56,989,570
Population projection between 2021 and 2031	190,772	1,715,674	59,389,102
Population projection between 2021 and 2031 for those aged 65+	14,519 up to 17,866 (18%) increase	21% increase	18% increase
Gender		791,284 male 817,899 female	28,203,353 male 28,786,217 female
Ethnicity	white (84.8%)	White (90.7%)	White (85.4%)
Population density	Area (hectares) 39,333 Density (persons per hectare) 4.4	Area (hectares) 354,295 Density (persons per hectare) 4.5	
Population by age group 2021	0 – 15 yrs 19% 16 – 64 yrs 62% 65+ 19%	0 – 15 yrs 18% 16 – 64 yrs 61% 65+ 21%	0 – 15 yrs 18% 16 – 64 yrs 63% 65+ 19%
Health & Wellbeing[6]			
Life expectancy	Male 80.5 yrs Female 83.7 yrs	Male 80.7 yrs Female 84.1 yrs	Male 79.6 yrs Female 83.2 yrs
Smokers	12.3%	12.9%	14.4%
Percentage of children in low income families	14.2%	12.9%	17%
Obesity			
Percentage of Adults classified as overweight or obese	61.4%	60.3%	62%
Prevalence of obesity in Yr 6 children	16.9%	16.8%	20.2%

[5] Source: ONS 2019 Mid-year population estimates
[6] Source: Public Health Profile Maidstone 2019

Demographic Statistics	Maidstone		Kent		England
Prevalence of excess weight in children[7]	Reception 24% excess weight 14% overweight 10.7% obese 2.7% severe obesity	Yr 6 32.5% excess weight 17.5% overweight 15% obese 3.5% severe obesity	Reception 25.2% excess weight 14.8% overweight 10.4% obese 2.5% severe obesity	Yr 6 34.6% excess weight 14.6% overweight 20% obese 4.2% severe obesity	
Educational Attainment					
Average GCSE attainment (score 8)	49.6		47.9		46.9
Those achieving NVQ Level 4 and above	5.6%		44.9%		43.1%
Deprivation					
The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD2019): Headline findings for Kent	Maidstone has 95 LSOA's, 2 of which are in the 10% most deprived in England. These LSOA's include the wards of Park Wood, Shepway South and High Street		There are 51 LSOA's in Kent within the 10% most deprived LSOA's in England, The majority are in Thanet and Swale.		
Physical Activity[8]					
Do fewer than 30 minutes activity a week - adults	28.9% 55% of these adults do no activity at all.		26.6%		27.1%
Fairly Active - adults	9.7%		10.7%		11.5%
Active (at least 150 mins per week) - adults	61.4%		62.7%		61.4%
Do fewer than 30 minutes activity per day – young people	25.6%		28.4%		31.3%
Fairly Active – young people	19.1%		25%		23.8%

[7] Source: National Child Measurement Report 2019/20 - Kent Public Health Laboratory
[8] Source: Sport England Active Lives Data 2019/2020

Demographic Statistics	Maidstone	Kent	England
Active (average of 60+ mins per day) – young people	55.2%	46.6%	44.9%

Maidstone Facility Planning Model National Runs (2020) – Swimming Pools and Sports Halls

3.2 Appendix 1 to this report presents a summary of the latest Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) National Runs for swimming pools and sports halls for Maidstone (2020). An FPM is a supply/demand gravity model to assess the strategic provision of community sports facilities in an area. The reports includes public, private/commercial and school swimming pools and sports halls available for community use. The reports highlight the following:

Swimming Pools

- Supply of water space per 1,000 population is just below national and regional levels.
- The Model suggests that there is just enough water space to meet demand; however the majority of this provision is ageing.
- Approximately 89% of demand is satisfied and the Model suggests that 15.5% of this demand is being exported into neighbouring areas in order to be met.
- Unmet demand is slightly above national, regional and neighbouring authority levels and nearly all of this is due to people living outside the catchment of a pool.
- The Model suggests that pools may have the capacity for higher levels of usage.
- 20% of the used capacity modelled is shown to be imported into the borough.
- Aggregated unmet demand is high to the south of Maidstone town centre as reflected in the FPM map for swimming pools

Sports Halls

- Courts per 10,000 population is below national and regional figures and is lower than all neighbouring authorities too.
- The supply and demand balance identified a shortfall of 9 courts of space at peak periods in Maidstone; this is the largest shortfall figure when compared to neighbouring authorities.
- Mote Hall's dual use approach as a concert venue exacerbates this problem
- Satisfied demand is similar to national and regional figures but approximately 26% of this demand is having to be exported out of the borough into facilities in neighbouring areas, which reflects the shortfall in supply potentially.
- The significant majority of unmet demand identified is modelled as being caused by people living outside of a catchment of a facility.
- Some of the existing halls may have some capacity and these are mainly on school sites.

3.3 The above FPM analysis suggests that there is a current under supply of sports halls and water space in the Borough and that unmet demand for swimming is high in the south of the borough. This supports the findings from the MBC Sports Facility Strategy Review 2020 which identifies a shortfall of pool space by 2037 based on future population growth, equivalent to one 25m x 6 lane pool, and 2.05 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access. The Sports Facility Strategy does not identify where in the borough this future provision should be delivered.

Local Community and Stakeholder Insight

‘Making Maidstone More Active’ Review

3.4 In September 2019 (pre-Covid), MBC launched a boroughwide residents’ survey to capture information on current behaviours, attitudes towards physical activity and opinions on local services, under the banner of ‘Making Maidstone More Active’. The aim of the process was to help the Council design a leisure service that would enable, encourage and empower residents to be more active.

3.5 A total of 2,045 responses were received. The key findings are set out below:

- **The majority of respondents thought that regular exercise was important but just under half said that they felt that they undertook enough exercise**
- **49.6% said that they undertake moderate physical activity at least 3 times per week**
- **Almost 7 in 10 respondents have a positive attitude towards becoming fit and healthy**
- **Barriers to becoming more physically active – the top 3 responses were lack of motivation, lack of suitable activities, and childcare/other carer commitments. Female respondents were more likely to list ‘lack of confidence’ as one of their main reasons.**
- **When asked what factors would encourage more activity, the top 3 answers were cost and fees, quality of facilities, and range of suitable activities**
- **The survey also asked respondents to pick from a list the top 2 things they thought would help make them more physically active. The top 3 responses were lower cost activities, improved walking and cycling networks, and more locally based facilities**
- **Respondents were asked what sports or physical activity they undertook on a regular basis. The top 6 responses were walking/hiking/rambling, gym/fitness club, swimming, fitness classes, running, cycling**

- **When asked what activity they would like to do more often the most popular responses were swimming, cycling, walking and running**
- **More than half the respondents had been part of a club or group in the past 4 weeks.**

- **When asked to rate their level of satisfaction with sport and exercise provision in Maidstone, the most common response was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. A significantly higher proportion of economically active respondents answered this question negatively compared to economically inactive who tended to respond neutrally.**

- **76.4% respondents thought that it was very important that Maidstone Borough Council provides opportunities for sporting and leisure activities**

- **The majority of respondents find out about local sport and leisure activities in the area via social media. However, a higher proportion of economically inactive respondents also referred to village newsletters and newspapers.**

3.6 It should be noted that this survey was undertaken pre-Covid and further consultation may be required to explore any changes in attitudes and behaviours to physical activity resulting from the pandemic. However, the survey did highlight some useful points for future consideration:

There is clearly an interest in informal outdoor leisure activities, particularly walking, cycling and running

A large proportion of respondents emphasised the importance of the quality of facilities in encouraging participation in physical activity

The majority of respondents were also neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with current sport and physical activity provision in Maidstone which suggests that perhaps the age and condition of the existing Maidstone Leisure Centre may be influencing their decision to use the facility

3.7 MBC will be arranging forums targeted at different user groups, demographics, and geographical areas of Maidstone to obtain a deeper understanding of the themes identified in the survey, obtain insight into the impact of the Covid pandemic on residents' leisure behaviours, and consult on proposals resulting from this report. These forums are anticipated to begin in early 2022.

Sport Club Covid-19 Survey – Maidstone Leisure Trust (March 2021)

3.8 A survey was undertaken by Maidstone Leisure Trust (MLT) during the Covid-19 pandemic to identify how sports clubs in Maidstone had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and if there was anything that could be done to support them during this time. 59 clubs were contacted but only 18 responses were received (a 31% response rate). This may be because a number of the clubs were not operating due to Covid restrictions or had disbanded.

3.9 Of the clubs who responded, the majority had seen their membership base decrease as a result of the pandemic but most believed that this would reverse once restrictions were removed. Most believed that this would happen at the latter end of 2021 or into 2022.

3.10 Only Village Golf had seen membership increase and this is possibly because golf was, for a short period, one of the few outdoor sports that was allowed to go ahead.

3.11 May of the clubs provided incentives, or online mechanisms, to encourage members to continue with club activities, but in most cases, this was not successful.

3.12 The majority of respondents reported a loss of income and little or no funding from Central or Local Government. One organisation received Rates Relief, presumably because they operated out of registered premises. One club had received financial support from their local Parish Council.

3.13 Some reported support from their National Governing Body. This support varied but included a Sports Council grant, general funding to support Covid precautions and administrative support for risk assessments.

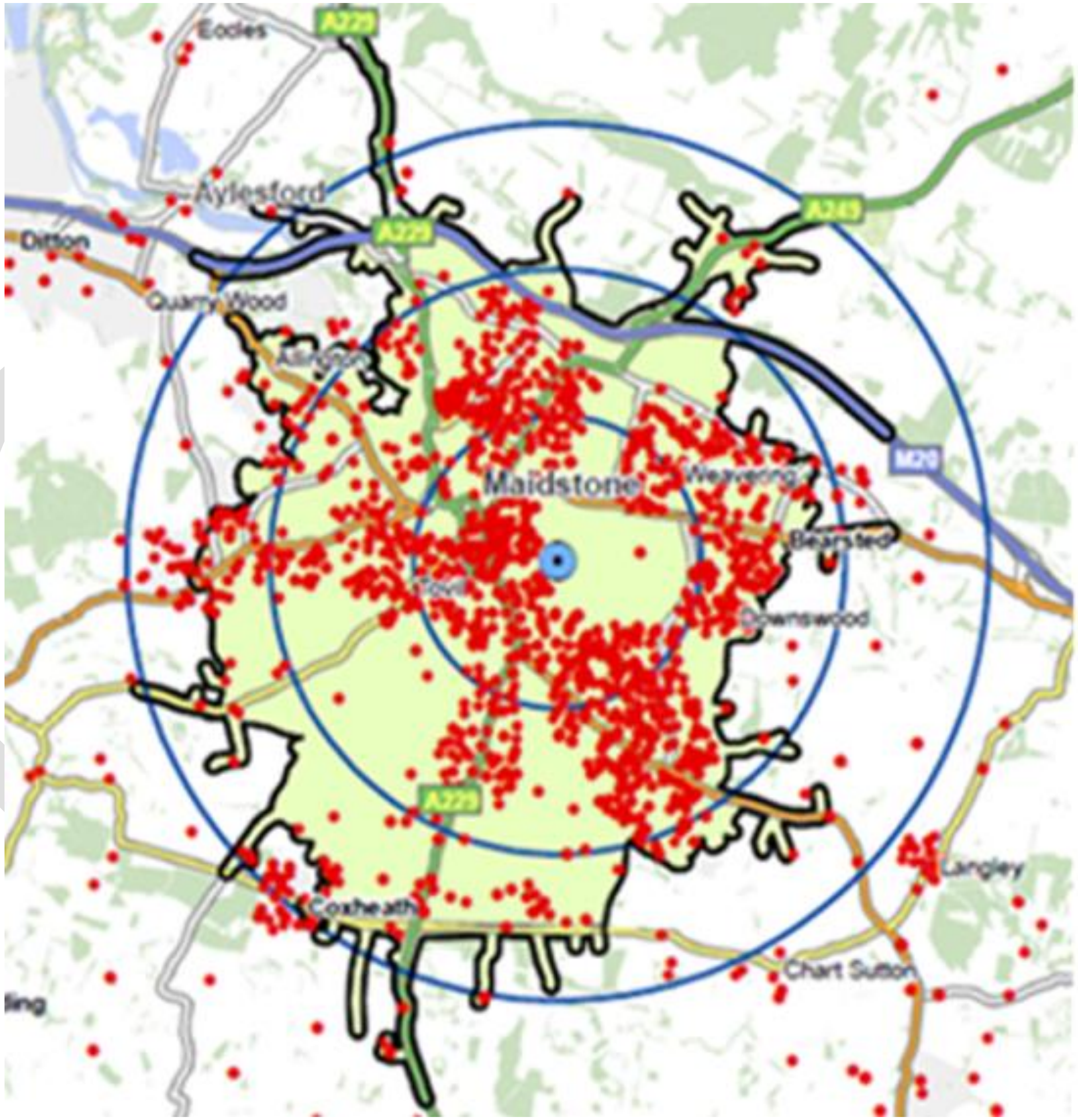
Serco Leisure Mosaic Profiling – Maidstone Leisure Centre

3.14 Serco's latest Mosaic profiling undertaken for Maidstone Leisure Centre highlights that the borough is very affluent with mainly above average incomes and the most prominent Mosaic profiles are as follows:

Table 3.2:

(B)Prestigious positions	• 56-65 • Established families in large, detached homes living up market lifestyles. • Supporting older children or students
(G) Domestic success – thriving independence	• 36-45 • Well qualified singles with good income.
(G) Domestic success – mid career conventions	• Professional married couples bringing up young families. • Comfortable living standards
(E) Senior Security	• **Most elderly group with average age of 75.** • They have sufficient income to buy their properties with mortgage paid off
(F) Suburban Stability	• Aged 55 – 65 • Single mature owners working in intermediate occupations • Supporting adult children who may be studying, looking for work or enjoying parents help • Respectable income and comfortable living •
(H) Aspiring Homemakers – primary ambitions	• Aged 26-45 • Couples with children who attend local nursery and primary schools • Good household incomes • Affordable homes in better neighbourhoods • Although cheaper properties in the neighbourhood bought as first time buyers and close to schools. May now be considering homes with more space.

Figure 2.1 Geographical distribution of Maidstone Leisure Centre Members 2019



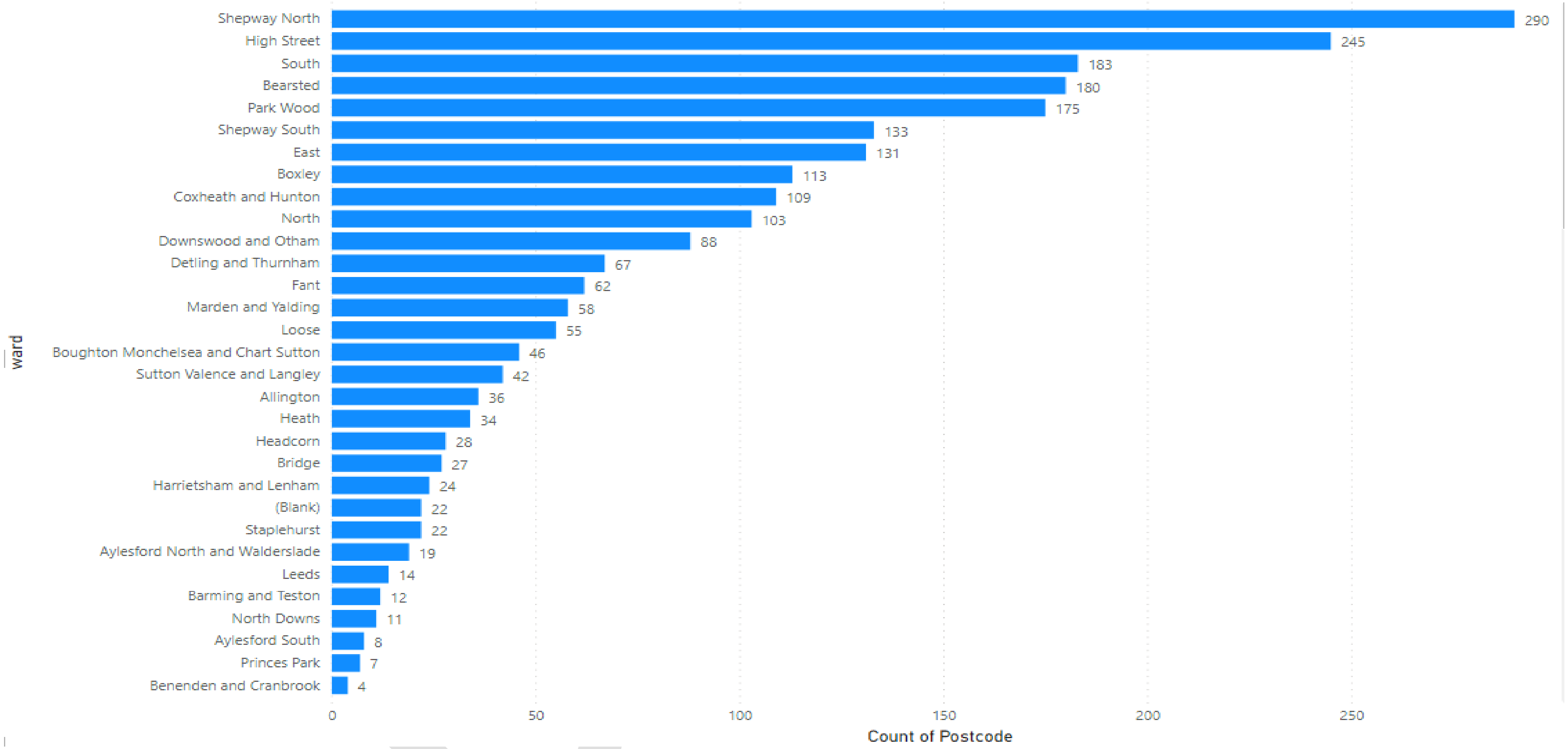
3.15 The most prominent profiles are (B) Prestigious Positions and (G) Domestic Success.

3.16 The age distribution of health and fitness members at Maidstone Leisure Centre is such that the 35 – 44 year age group constitutes the largest proportion of members. The proportion of members aged 25 to 34 years and 55 – 64 years is relatively low compared to other Serco contract sites.

3.17 Figure 3.1 opposite shows the geographical distribution of Maidstone Leisure Centre members. The map shows the distribution of members within a 10, 20 and 30 minute drive time of Maidstone Leisure Centre. The map shows that a high proportion of members live in Maidstone Town Centre itself and within close proximity to the main arterial roads leading out of the town centre (i.e. A229, A274, A20, A249).

3.18 Figure 3.2 below provides a breakdown of health and fitness and swimming members by ward. The breakdown shows that approximately 34% of these members come from Maidstone's wards of highest deprivation i.e. Shepway North, High Street, Park Wood and Shepway South.

Figure 3.2 Number of Health and Fitness and Swimming Members by ward



3.19 Table 3.3 provides a further breakdown showing how the proportion of members who live in wards of highest deprivation compare to the proportion of the Maidstone population who live in these wards:

Table 3.3: Proportion of MLC members living in wards of high deprivation

Maidstone Ward of high Deprivation	Proportion of population who live in ward as a % of overall Maidstone Population 171,800 (2019)[9]	Proportion of population who live in ward as a % of Maidstone Urban Area Population 128,110 (2019)	% of MLC H & F/Swim Members living in ward	% of MLC swim lesson and dry course members living in ward
Shepway North	5	7	12	8
High Street	4	5	10	10
Park Wood	5	7	7	9
Shepway South	7	9	5	5

3.20 Table 3.3 shows that uptake of health and fitness/swim memberships is disproportionately high in Shepway North and High Street wards when compared to the population of those wards. This may be due to the immediate proximity of these wards to Maidstone Leisure Centre. A similar pattern is exhibited for swim lesson and dry course memberships but with Park Wood ward also showing disproportionately high numbers. Of those members who live in a postcode with an Index of Multiple Deprivation of 1 – 10 (10 being the least deprived), approximately 62 – 65% live in a postcode with an Index of Multiple Deprivation of 1 – 5. This is positive in that it shows that the leisure centre is attracting membership from areas of high deprivation, however, further work could be undertaken to target membership in Shepway South ward.

3.21 There is greater health and fitness competition from the premium providers in the area with a similar offering i.e. David Lloyd, The Village, Freedom Leisure, Top Notch/Welcome Gym. The nearest competition is Pure Gym which is located 1.2 miles from Maidstone Leisure Centre and offers a 220 station gym.

[9] Source: ONS MYPE for wards released 2020

3.22 Taking the above into consideration, Serco has identified the following key priorities for retaining and building on membership at Maidstone Leisure Centre going forward:

- **Add value to attract and retain the 55+ market:**
  - Maidstone has an affluent 55+ demographic present.
  - As people get older swimming becomes more popular which is a USP against the low cost centre. Ensure good provision of swimming at relevant times for this audience.
  - The proposition of adding Shapemaster appears aligned to the demographic.
  - Review our offer to consider what else we can do to **add value** to this audience and ensure communication of relevant benefits e.g. classes tailored to this age group, community activity, swimming, Shapemaster.

- **Add value to attract and retain the family market with school children or younger**
  - Parents likely to be attracted by the mix of classes, gym and pool and so a key target.
  - Swimming lessons are a key attraction.
  - Similar to the 55+ market consider how we can **add value** and market to this userbase e.g. class provision, family events, taster lessons.

- **Consider older Children living away or being supported by parents as a lower priority.**
  - Potentially more likely to be attracted to low cost providers and consider a lower priority.
  - Could consider offering 'free' passes for when older children are home from studying?

Maidstone Leisure Centre – School and Sports Club Surveys

3.23 A survey was sent out to all sport clubs and schools in Maidstone to obtain feedback on the existing Maidstone Leisure Centre and Mote Park and identify current and future facility needs. An analysis of both surveys is attached as Appendix 2. The surveys took place over a 4 week period in September/October 2021. A survey was sent out to 67 schools and a total of 11 responses were received representing a 16% response rate. This is slightly disappointing, considering that all schools were contacted more than once during the consultation period. A summary of the key findings from the schools' survey are as follows:

- 35% of schools that responded (4 schools) use MLC and for the purpose of their school swim lesson programme.
- When asked to rate the facilities/services used at MLC, 20% regarded the pool changing facilities as poor; the main reasons for this included a poor state of cleanliness or the need for updating/refurbishment.
- Only 4 schools responded to the question regarding how they travel to MLC. All 4 schools used a bus to travel and 2 of these schools took 0 -15 minutes to travel to MLC and the remaining schools took 15 – 30 minutes.
- The main reason for not using MLC more often is the location/lack of time to travel (32%) followed by the lack of school transport (26%) and quality of the facilities/services (21%).

- When asked what indoor sports facilities/services their school would need in the future, 7 schools did not respond to the question and the remaining schools suggested a 3G pitch or assistance with the cost of transport/facility hire (school located in area of deprivation).
- Only 1 school confirmed that it used outdoor sport and leisure facilities in Mote Park. The school used the public park area rather than specific outdoor sports facilities.
- The main reasons for not using Mote Park were lack of school transport (78%) and location/time taken to travel (55%).
- When asked to suggest ways that the two venues could work together to provide a more integrated offer for schools, one suggestion was to provide a dedicated outdoor area for schools separate to the public to avoid any safeguarding issues.
- Other comments about MLC included lack of/poor communication by the leisure operator when dealing with swim lesson bookings.

3.24 A survey was sent out to 65 sports clubs and a total of 17 responses were received which represents a 26% response rate. A summary of the key findings from the sports club survey are as follows:

- Responses were received from a wide range of clubs in the borough including Triathlon, Running, Roller Skating (artistic), Golf and Cheerleading.
- 69% of clubs that responded cater for people with disabilities; no details were provided regarding specialist coaches/equipment provided.
- 25% of clubs currently have over 80 active playing members; prior to Covid, approximately 70% of clubs had over 80 active members.
- The majority of clubs had seen an increase in membership in the 5 years prior to Covid.
- Approximately 70% of clubs expect to see an increase in membership over the next 5 years.
- 69% of clubs that responded have more than 11 volunteers.
- When asked for the location of the club's most used venue, all venues given are located within the Maidstone borough boundary.
- Other venues used included venues in Haywards Heath, Gillingham and Tunbridge Wells.
- Only 13% of clubs that responded use MLC; those clubs rated the facilities as 'standard'.
- There was uncertainty as to how their members travel to MLC. 67% said that their members travelled by car, but an equivalent percentage said that they didn't know.
- When asked what would encourage their members to walk or cycle to MLC, 35% suggested secure covered cycle parking, followed by better connected/signposted walking and cycling network (20%) and reward incentives (20%).
- 46% of clubs said that lack of suitable facilities or cost of hire prevented them from using MLC more often; however, lack of availability was highlighted (38%) and lack of engagement from MLC.
- Lack of storage (60%) and need for better equipment (39%) were also highlighted as reasons for not using MLC more often. Some clubs (43%) also said that MLC could not cater for the specialist facilities required for their sport.
- None of the clubs that responded used any outdoor sport and leisure facilities in Mote Park.
- When asked to think of ways in which the two venues could work together and provide a more integrated offer, Maidstone Harriers suggest the provision of an athletics track on site. There is also the suggestion of providing a cross country route in the park.
- Other comments include the high cost of hiring the facilities, lack of sports hall court availability and pool hire availability, more space needed for land training, and a sports hall that cannot cater for professional and competitive basketball. There were comments from Maidstone Harriers

about working with MBC for provision of better training options for the club including swimming, cycling/spin and core strength. As with the schools' survey, there was criticism about lack of/poor communication from the leisure operator. The cycling club suggests that there may be an opportunity for the club to make MLC its base for indoor and outdoor training/competition.

3.25 Individual face to face consultation with Maidstone Leisure Centre key sports clubs highlighted the need for more hall space in the borough with a number of the clubs wanting their own dedicated space. Clubs thought that Maidstone Leisure Centre is too expensive and does not offer them sufficient time. The latter has been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic.

MLT/Serco Leisure Insight – Maidstone Leisure Centre

3.26 MLT and Serco Leisure highlight the following key issues when consulted regarding the current Maidstone Leisure Centre and future leisure needs for the borough:

- MBC is keen for a new Maidstone Leisure Centre to be a regional facility with rural areas supported by outreach leisure provision, utilising existing indoor and outdoor community facilities. Sport England has a blueprint for an efficient, affordable leisure centre design that it recommends local authorities use, but this may not necessarily fit with local political desire.

- MLT queried whether it would be better to create smaller sports hubs across the borough, supporting existing sports clubs, rather than having one central leisure centre. MLT highlight that some sports clubs have their own facilities. However, this would not address the key priority of encouraging more of the general population to take part in physical activity, bringing as many activities together centrally to optimise the opportunity to participate. Essential life skill activities such as swimming could be subsidised by more commercial type activities e.g. health and fitness. MLT's view was that the majority of sports clubs in Maidstone tend not to use Maidstone Leisure Centre but use community halls instead. The Sports Club Survey undertaken for this project supports this view.

- **Swimming Pool** – Maidstone Leisure Centre pools attracts visitors from all over Kent. Day visits are common. For this to continue, it is important to have the volume of activities and for this to include pool fun/leisure features. Serco supports the suggestion of having an 8 lane 25m main pool and 4 lane 25m training pool with moveable floor. The ASA has said that there is a need for an 8 lane 25m competition pool and Maidstone Leisure Centre would provide an ideal centrally located venue in Kent for swim competition. At present, swimming clubs are having to travel to Medway Park for galas This is an aging facility and not particularly suitable. MLT agreed that there are currently poor facilities locally for competitive swimming. There are currently poor viewing facilities for parents wanting to watch their child take part in swim lessons.

- **Leisure Pool** – Serco suggest extending the water play offer by providing wet play facilities external to the building to capitalise on the core family market. This could be included in both a refurbishment or new build.

- **Diving Pit** - From a commercial perspective, Serco would not include a diving pit in a new/refurbished leisure centre.

- **Changing Rooms** – There are an insufficient number of changing rooms at peak times at Maidstone Leisure Centre. The layout should also be reviewed; needs to be more open with fewer corridors. Maidstone Leisure Centre is informally referred to as the 'aquatics disability centre' for Kent and is used by Kent disability Club, Maidstone Disabled Swim Club, and Bubbles Swim School (part of the Learn to Swim Scheme). Serco invested in improvement to changing facilities for people with disabilities. Provision for people with disabilities needs incorporating into the design of new changing rooms. Also need to consider access into the pools so that people with disabilities can enter the water in a dignified manner, ideally without the need for assistance from staff.

- **Sports Hall/Events** – The existing 6 court sports hall is a versatile multi-purpose space offering an empty hall for sporting competition, to a full theatre set up with a large stage and a seating capacity to accommodate an audience of 1200, for bands, comedians such as Jimmy Carr, and regular events throughout the year such as Maidstone Symphony Orchestra, Boxing, Robot Wars, Wrestling shows and dance competitions. Our hirers are not all local to Kent; some come as far as Manchester. The venue is also popular with the community for cultural events and wedding receptions. The hall can comfortably hold 500 guests seated.

3.27 To host these big events, Serco has to hire in tables and chairs as there is not adequate storage on site to hold additional furniture. On occasion, Serco also needs to hire in additional function bars to accommodate the large numbers attending.

3.28 In 2018, the leisure centre took £20,150 over the bar and £74,070 in event hire. In 2019, the leisure centre took £25,871 over the bar and £71,101 in events hire. The cost of hire for a full set up with stage and seating is approximately £2,100. The cost of hire of an empty hall with no equipment is approximately £600 depending on the length of hire.

3.29 Depending on the season, the sports hall is used for events 3 weekends out of 4. This essentially means that sports clubs and casual hirers are unable to use the sports hall on those weekends. The sports hall facility needs and issues outlined in the Maidstone Sport Facility Strategy 2019 are compounded by the current arrangements at Maidstone Leisure Centre.

3.30 Serco said that it is also becoming more difficult to attract commercial acts/shows to leisure centres, essentially because the venue does not lend itself aesthetically to these types of activities, particularly as customer expectations increase.

3.31 Serco would retain a 6 court sports hall in a new/refurbished Maidstone Leisure Centre to cater for the demand from sports clubs.

3.32 MLT would recommend that MBC provide a separate new large concert/events venue for the borough to cater for the arts and cultural needs of the borough.

- **Soft Play** – Serco would suggest having soft play area adjacent to the café and separate to pool environment. Consideration should be given to Tag Active or similar activities targeting the family or pre-teen market. If refurbishment, consider re-configuring the existing ice hills and adventure zone area.

- **Café** – to be accessible from the outside/park so that public do not have to pay for entry into the leisure centre to use the café. Ideally located so that parents can watch the family taking part in swim lessons, soft play, and/or leisure pool activities.

- **Health and Fitness Suite** – Maidstone Leisure Centre currently has approximately 100 stations, 21/22 members per station. The gym is split across 3 floors which is not ideal. Serco would ideally like to see a health studio/Shapemaster suite, consulting rooms and medium size multi-purpose space. The Shapemaster suite would be separate to the main gym, providing power assisted exercise and rehabilitation, catering for the 55+ market, disabled, those suffering with poor mobility, and those living with long term health conditions. There is a lack of provision locally and a demand for 11,000 users. Serco would like to develop integrated solution with local health providers, but also create some suitable space for rental by third parties supplying dental and optometry to deliver complimentary services.

- **Studios** – Serco would like to see a purpose built cycle/spin studio and 2 separate studios catering for different exercise classes. They would cater for virtual classes, but the usage of these classes is relatively low. There has been a shift towards home workouts delivered by your favourite leisure centre instructor and Serco would continue to offer this.

Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust

3.33 There is a new programme called **Community Health Transformation Programme** which is due to roll out from 2023/4, in which the NHS will be seeking to make mental health services more integrated and accessible to the general public, working with other providers such as Live Well Kent, and commissioned through Kent County Council.

3.34 The Trust has expressed interest in the Maidstone Leisure Centre project and specifically the opportunity to co-locate adult mental health services and potentially Live Well Kent services on the same site as part of a community hub concept. There would be far less stigma attached to providing these types of services in an informal setting rather than in a hospital environment. Only a relatively small, allocated space would be required.

3.35 Maidstone is a high priority area for the Trust with poor levels of mental health, both in the town centre but also the more isolated rural communities.

3.36 The Trust is also currently looking at the introduction of **Community Diagnostic Hubs**: one stop shops for the community to receive lifesaving health checks close to home. The Trust is looking to set these up in free space on the high street and retail parks. The space would provide x ray, CT scanning, blood test and screening services. This may also be an option for the Maidstone Leisure Centre project.

Kent County Council Youth Service

3.37 The Youth Service has expressed interest in offering youth services from a new community hub facility in Mote Park. They already do outreach work from the park and would be able to offer more services, particularly if a better outdoor skatepark facility was available as part of the development to encourage greater participation and interaction with young people.

3.38 Their role is changing and they now help support and educate young people e.g. on sexual health, drugs etc. They provide this support through workshops and groups. They could ideally provide sexual health support including provision of sexual health protection/information from a new community hub in Mote Park if space was made available. This would provide a less judgemental environment compared to a medical practice, as no one would know why they were visiting the community hub.

Maidstone Volleyball Club

3.39 Membership of Maidstone Volleyball Club has grown significantly in the last three years, particularly within the 11 – 18 year age group. The Club is keen to be able to support this growth (the Club currently has 200 members, 100 of which are active) and interest in playing volleyball and needs more hall space on a regular basis for training and competition.

3.40 Consultation with the Club highlighted their interest in developing outdoor volleyball courts in Mote Park. They know that these would be used by local schools and the Club would be willing to provide courses, instructors etc.

3.41 The Chairman of the Club is also the Chairman of Kent Volleyball. At a County and local level there is a desire to develop the game and there is an aspiration to develop a regular competition venue where not just club matches could be hosted but National League and Junior Grand Prix league sessions, where 8 – 10 clubs would play at one time.

3.42 Volleyball has significant potential to grow further in the Maidstone area given the interest from eastern European students and communities; it provides an opportunity to be active in a sociable environment and can benefit both physical and mental health.

Consultation with Neighbouring Local Authorities

3.43 Consultation has been undertaken with neighbouring local authorities to identify their plans/proposals for investment in the Active Environment so that provision in Maidstone can take this into account.

Table 3.4 Consultation with Neighbouring Local Authorities

Local Authority	Consultation Feedback
Tonbridge and Malling (TMBC)	TMBC provides three leisure facilities, all managed by TM Active, a local trust. There has been extensive investment in facilities in recent years. The Council is considering the future options for the Angel Centre (dryside) given proposals for the Tonbridge town centre re-development. There is also Tonbridge Swimming Pool in the town. Larkfield Leisure Centre, Aylesford is the largest facility, including a significant leisure water offer. This facility draws users for a wide catchment including that side of Maidstone. It is not considered that investment in the Maidstone leisure offer would impact adversely on the Larkfield facility.
Medway Council (MC)	MC facilities are operated in-house. MC is investing in a comparable replacement for the Splashes Sports Centre, Rainham, Gillingham; this will include a replacement leisure pool and fitness suite. The new centre, on the same site will be open from July 2024. There is a proposal to develop a new garden village adjacent to Gillingham as part of Medway's provision for new homes. There is significant housing development planned for the Hoo Peninsula; this will take place up to 2030. As part of this investment in new leisure provision is anticipated, predominantly funded through S106 contributions. It is not yet clear how this would impact the existing Hoo Sports Centre. There are currently no definitive plans to replace Medway Park Leisure Centre, Gillingham which is the venue currently used for competitive swimming, and by the Kent ASA. At Strood Leisure Centre there is a water polo club; this pool can only be used for water polo training not competition.
Swale District Council (SDC)	SDC also has Serco as leisure operator. Approx. 3 years ago, the Council decided to undertake a review of leisure. On the back of this, the leisure contract was extended by 5 years (now due to end 2025) to allow the Council more time to determine the future direction of its leisure facilities and services. However, a re-structure subsequently took place and the opportunity to review leisure was lost. Covid then happened. SDC intend to look at a leisure strategy from Sept/Oct 2021 and link this to the new local plan. There will be an options paper first, considering how many facilities they need and what they provide etc. It is unlikely that they will do anything with the Swallows LC because of the recent roof repairs, which cost the Council a significant amount of money. SDC is of the view that there are a small percentage of Swale residents who use the existing Maidstone LC, mainly families, due to the offer available there. Does not feel that many Maidstone residents travel to use Swale facilities. Would be easy for Serco to undertake a member catchment area analysis across the 2 districts. Swale is approximately 12 miles from Maidstone. The main access route is the A249.

Summary

3.44 The above insight together with feedback from key stakeholders (Appendix 3) identifies a number of health and physical activity inequalities affecting Maidstone residents and creating barriers to taking part in physical activity. These can be summarised as follows:

- **High levels of physical inactivity in both children and adults. The Covid 19 pandemic has only exacerbated this issue.**
- **Participation rates are higher in the more affluent rural parts of the borough compared to urban areas where participation is lower. The lowest levels are in the south-east of Maidstone town, within close proximity to Maidstone Leisure Centre.**
- **There is a correlation between low levels of physical activity in Maidstone and areas of high deprivation (Park Wood, High Street, Shepway North and South wards)**
- **The existing Maidstone Leisure Centre does attract membership from areas of high deprivation within close proximity of the facility, particularly Shepway North and High Street wards**
- **Levels of childhood obesity are increasing in Maidstone**
- **An ageing population is leading to pressure on social services**
- **Increasingly mental health issues are affecting individuals and families**
- **There is poor physical accessibility for people with disabilities using Maidstone Leisure Centre e.g. lack of disabled parking close to the centre, the steep slope down to the main reception is difficult to navigate for people in wheelchairs, the size of the building and length of internal corridors make it tiring to navigate as a disabled user.**
- **The top 3 reasons for residents not becoming more physically active are (1) lack of motivation (2) lack of suitable activities and (3) childcare/other care commitments**
- **The top 3 things that would encourage residents to become more active are (1) lower cost activities (2) improved walking and cycling network and (3) more locally based activities (this was the top answer for the 65+ age group)**
- **The top 3 factors that would encourage more physical activity are (1) cost and fees (2) the quality of facilities and (3) the range of suitable activities**

- **The popularity of informal activities such as walking and cycling within Maidstone may reflect the age profile of the borough.**

Opportunities for Change

3.45 There are a number of potential opportunities for addressing the above:

- **A new Maidstone Leisure Centre, providing high quality accessible sport and leisure facilities.**
- **Better integration of the leisure centre with the adjacent Mote Park to create a destination venue, developing the Active Environment and connectivity through the provision of accessible walking and cycling routes and linking indoor facilities with outdoor activities and facilities in the park.**
- **Opportunities to link the leisure centre and the park through shared provision such as outdoor changing, café, outdoor leisure pool.**
- **Opportunity to better link the leisure centre with the neighbouring Mote Cricket, Rugby and Squash and Indoor Bowls clubs.**
- **Co-location opportunities to attract more people to Maidstone Leisure Centre for physical activity and wider health benefits e.g. Adult and Young Persons Mental Health services, Youth Service (sexual/drug support services), GP Referral, cardiac rehabilitation, long term health condition activities etc.**
- **Opportunity to provide complementary outdoor sport and leisure facilities (e.g. volleyball courts, skatepark, MUGA, Pumptrack, Splashpad) which link/integrate the leisure centre with the adjacent Mote Park and Active Environment, encouraging particularly young people to engage in physical activity.**
- **Opportunity to provide separate concert/events venue for the borough to free up space in the sports hall at Maidstone Leisure Centre and help address demand for community accessible sports hall provision for casual use and sports clubs at weekends.**
- **Investment in new swimming facilities to increase capacity, optimise learn to swim programme, provide flexible programming and provide a regional competition pool for swimming etc.**
- **MBC to deliver co-ordinating role in future for outreach health and physical activity provision in rural areas, working with third sector organisations to deliver key outcomes.**

- **Future leisure management contract to incorporate direct delivery of an extended range of outreach provision in rural areas and areas of high deprivation with KPI's directly relating to MBC key outcomes for health and physical activity.**

- **Making better use of outreach community facilities for delivery of health and physical activity to rural areas.**

- **Address the scope and range of Maidstone Leisure Centre facilities to increase capacity, raise levels of participation, provide for those with a disability, those aged 55+, those on low incomes and enable increased revenue generation.**

- **Opportunities to develop working partnerships with the NHS including GPs, social prescribing (Involve Kent), One You Kent programmes, Maidstone Hospital and the West Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group focussing on provision of a suite of services for individuals with health conditions.**

- **Opportunities to provide a combined GP referral scheme and Green Prescription Scheme which incorporates both indoor and outdoor physical activities in the leisure centre and parks, encouraging positive physical and mental wellbeing.**

- **Opportunity to introduce a means tested leisure card for the borough to provide discounted activities for those who would benefit the most and encourage participation in indoor and outdoor sport and physical activity. This scheme could be introduced as part of the re-procurement of the leisure contract as a contractor requirement.**

4. Interventions

Our Response

Where are we going to deliver our interventions?

4.1. MBC's Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Diagnostic (February 2021) recommended that further feasibility work be carried out on the following 4 options for addressing MBC's shared outcomes for physical activity. All options involved the retention of a leisure centre on the site of the existing Maidstone Leisure Centre:

Table 4.1: Feasibility Options - advantages and disadvantages

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Refurbish Existing Maidstone LC	• Central location adjacent to Mote Park • Close to town centre and areas of high deprivation • Retaining existing customer base • Good free car parking provision • Opportunity to improve links to active environment/park • Central Concert venue remains available • Greater connection via cycling/walking/running with the leisure centre • Refurbishment scheme and operator proposals could be incorporated into new leisure management procurement process in advance of 2024.	• Significant capital needs to be spent on back of house i.e. plant and equipment, roof replacement; whilst this investment is a priority, it will not add to the customer experience of using the facility • Poor access by road and cycle, with no linked cycle routes, busy town centre one way system • Limited scope to change configuration of building and layout. • No direct link to adjacent park and clubs • Distance from new areas of population growth • Limited scope to alter facility mix to meet changing leisure needs of population • Previous refurbishments resulted in short term rather than long term increase in usage • Perception of 'no change' from residents • No proper assessment of business case for retaining concert venue on current site • Management Contract is likely to be less attractive to leisure operators and they will cost for risk in managing an ageing building • Continued high carbon emissions due to age and inefficient design of building

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
2. Invest in a new Leisure and Physical Activity hub with co-located community services e.g. GP surgery, CAB etc in Mote Park to replace the existing MLC	• Ability to take full advantage of location and re-orientate building to integrate with park and neighbouring facilities e.g. direct link to Outdoor Adventure, access to café in entrance without entering facility, view out to park etc • Provision of complimentary co-located community facilities providing integrated health and physical activity offer • Greater connection with the leisure centre via cycling/walking/running routes • Efficient design of facility with facility mix that meets the current and future needs of the Borough • Opportunity to review target market – regional or local facility? (planning aim is for Maidstone to become a regional destination once again) • Opportunity to target hard to reach groups through hub approach to delivery. • Opportunity for assessment of business case for retaining Concert Venue on same site. • Retention of good parking • More cost effective long term than adding to old facility structure • Option to develop borough discount card/membership for indoor/outdoor leisure provision • A new leisure facility is likely to be very attractive to leisure facility operators and proposals could be incorporated into new leisure contract procurement process, ensuring better financial return to the Council • Opportunity to incorporate new key health and physical activity KPI's into new leisure management contract reflecting priorities of the Council • Capital cost less likely to be prohibitive	• Poor access by road and cycle, with no linked cycle routes, busy town centre one way system • Only one facility serving the whole population of the Borough – what about meeting the needs of new population growth in rural fringes. • Hub will only work if joined up working/commitment of key partners • Rural provision would need to operate as complimentary to the main physical activity hub. Smaller, informal provision in the rural areas may not be attractive to an external operator •

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
3. Adopt a Hub and spoke approach i.e. new Leisure and Physical Activity hub with co-located community services e.g. GP surgery, CAB etc in Mote Park supported by outreach service/provision in rural villages	• As per Option 2, plus: • Option to reduce/vary the facility mix with some facilities located on the outer fringes of the Borough as part of smaller community outreach facility(ies). Cost benefit analysis will be needed. Need to determine whether MLC is to be a regional or borough facility. • This could alleviate some car access issues and be strategically located closer to new housing development. • Outreach provision could also include support given by the Council to existing community facilities/organisations to help them be sustainable long term • Opportunity to review management options for sites for inclusion in new leisure management contract post 2024. • Opportunity to include outreach element of service provision within new leisure management contract, giving greater responsibility to operator to deliver key services/activities in parks and community/village halls etc • Alternatively, smaller facilities would have the potential to be managed by local organisations under asset transfer	• Changed/reduced facility mix at current MLC site may meet with public opposition • Loss of 'flagship' status of MLC site • Negative impact (e.g. reduced levels of activity) of moving some leisure provision away from areas of high deprivation in the urban centre • Hub will only work if there is joined up working/commitment of key partners • Capital cost of investing in multiple locations could be prohibitive •
4. Invest in a new Leisure and Physical Activity hub with co-located community services e.g. GP surgery, CAB etc in Mote Park to replace the existing MLC and develop a new leisure centre to serve the new communities which will live in the new housing to the south of the Borough	• As per Option 2, plus: • Another new facility could act as a satellite site to the main physical activity hub in Mote Park • It may be perceived that a smaller facility serving the rural areas (likely to comprise of a small pool, multi-purpose space and fitness facilities and possibly a sports hall) would balance the provision in the north, more urban areas of the Borough • Providing two facilities may better address identified facility needs set out in the Sports Facility Strategy • Two new facilities would constitute an attractive offer for an outsourced contract and would be likely to generate a return to MBC	• Changed/reduced facility mix at current MLC site may meet with public opposition • Loss of 'flagship' status of MLC site • Negative impact (e.g. reduced levels of activity) of moving some leisure provision away from areas of high deprivation in the urban centre • Hub will only work if there is joined up working/commitment of key partners • Capital cost of investing in multiple locations could be prohibitive • May not provide as great opportunity to develop a range of provision • Potential to reduce usage of a hub facility in Mote Park?

Feasibility Option 1 – Refurbishment of Maidstone Leisure Centre

4.2. A further assessment has been undertaken of Feasibility Option 1 by Saunders Boston Architects concerning the viability of a refurbishment scheme for the existing Maidstone Leisure Centre.

Changing Leisure Trends

4.3. Refurbishment of leisure centres can be extremely challenging. Many of the leisure centres built in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's are now approaching or passed the end of their working lives. Sport and leisure trends have moved on and the demand for some of those facilities have changed dramatically.

4.4. For example, many facilities developed in the 1970's and 1980's included 'leisure water' at the heart of their offering with a combination of flumes, play features and sometimes wave machines. In contrast, today most swimming pools are developed around the demands for learn to swim and lane swimming programmes.

4.5. Similarly, a gym would have previously comprised of a small underutilised and unattractive space in a facility, today the state of the art fitness suite is now front and centre of a leisure centre and seen as the primary source of revenue.

4.6. Over the years, leisure centres have tried (some more successfully than others) to adapt to changing trends and customer demands through extensions and alterations but on many occasions, a building can reach a point where alterations or extensions no longer offer best value. In the case of Maidstone Leisure Centre, this building is very much at this threshold for the following reasons:

Access

4.7. In 1995 a landmark piece of Legislation called the Disabled Discrimination Act (DDA) was introduced. This resulted in a fundamental change in how we all interact with the Public realm. Superseded in 2010 by the Equality Act many public buildings have been left struggling to be adapted and comply.

4.8. Maidstone Leisure Centre users encounter various changes in level which have been mitigated through lifts and platform lifts. It leads to an uncomfortable customer journey that starts at the car park, down the steps/steep slope into the building, through the build all the way to poolside where a crane/sling unit is mounted poolside to lift disabled people into the pool tank.

Building Fabric

4.9. The building fabric has had regular maintenance and some replacement over the years. Broadly speaking it is in good order and fit for purpose in the short/medium term. The thermal and airtightness performance however of the existing envelope falls significantly short of current standards. This results in higher running costs as warm air is lost through the building envelope (particularly glazed areas and material/building junctions e.g. wall meets roof).

4.10. To offer any significant extension (say 20 years plus) to the life span of the building substantial improvements are required. This type of regeneration would require a new highly insulated external façade and roof with higher performing air-tightness construction. Alongside new min double glazing with thermally broken frames and solar glass.

Swimming Pool Design

4.11. Since the swimming pools at Maidstone Leisure Centre were built, there has been a fundamental shift in swimming pool design. To improve user experience, safety and water standards (filtration) deck level pools are now typical. As swimmers enter the pool, water is displaced over the edge of the edge of the pool into a ‘transfer’ channel (trough) and encouraged through the filtration system rather than back into the main body of water therefore improving water hygiene. This reduces the wave’s bouncing back from the pool edge. It brings the water to a higher level reducing the impact should someone fall into the water as well as improving visibility for spectators and crucially lifeguarding, as hidden corners are eliminated. Retrofitting such improvements to and existing pool can be complex and costly given the need for a waterproof construction.

4.12. Today swimming pools, including 25m community and regional short course pools, need to apply strict tolerances around the pool lengths to ensure timed swimming events are comparable. These tolerance are measured by an independent surveyor.

4.13. Pool surround standards have also developed. The size of pools surrounds has developed significantly with the HSE and governing bodies such as Swim England and Sport England to ensure users have sufficient space to transition safely around the pool edge.

Circulation

4.14. The existing centre has developed over many years. In order to facilitate the additional new facilities, more and more circulation has been added. This circulation adds to the overall size of the building and becomes very inefficient. As a result some corridors become uninviting, are poorly decorated and badly lit. If refurbished, this will result in an ongoing need to continually refresh (paint and re-carpet) multiple circulation areas and multiple stair cores.

Adjacencies

4.15. Adjacencies are the ways in which one space interacts with another. For example it is fundamental that the changing room is adjacent to the swimming pool. As Maidstone LC has been extended and refurbished over time, some issues with adjacencies have been addressed.

4.16. From a customer perspective there are a number of adjacencies that are expected in a modern leisure centre. At Maidstone Leisure Centre the relationship of the spectator seating to the viewing area and the café are compromised and this effects the user experience between parents and children. At present the Fitness suite is split between levels and shares no relationship to the studio/multi-purposes spaces, this is difficult for the operator to manage and is uninviting for users. Any future refurbishment options would struggle to address many of the adjacency issues including;

- **Pool / viewing**
- **Café / viewing**
- **Entrance / café**
- **Fitness / studios**
- **Fitness / Dry change**
- **Reception / wet change**
- **Sport hall / cafe**

The Pool Environment

4.17. The most complex part of any leisure centre to service is the Pool hall. At Maidstone the Leisure Pool is located in an open environment with no physical separation between the pool area, café, activity are and the entrance. Air temperature is therefore a critical issue. Typically a leisure pool should be 29/30 degrees with the air temperature 1 degree higher. This means if the pool is heated to the correct temperature the adjacent areas are extremely high for an individual who is fully clothed sitting in a café. Alternatively if the pool is too cold it will be undesirable for swimmers.

Plant and Mechanical and Electrical Services

4.18. Under the existing Maidstone Leisure Centre contract with MLT/Serco, the Council pays Serco £624,000 per annum for maintenance. This sum is fixed over the life of the contract and was arranged through Serco PAISA Ltd, a financial leasing company. The £624,000 per annum is the Council's loan repayment which totals approximately £9 million over the life of the contract. The original lifecycle maintenance programme was drawn up in 2008. An updated condition survey was commissioned in January 2020 prior to Covid to help prioritise the remaining PAISA fund through to the end of the contract period.

4.19. The building services associated to a leisure centre are large, complex to maintain and expensive to replace. To fully understand the life spans of current plant and machinery a full condition survey will be required. It is likely that despite regular routine care and maintenance much of the primary plant and infrastructure will be approaching the end of its working life and due for replacement. Running old plant for longer can often become a false economy and never run efficiently. It is therefore likely that a significant proportion of any finance allocated to a refurbishment scheme will need to be spent on back of house plant and infrastructure, so the public may not necessarily see many visible front of house improvements as a result of the Council's investment.

External Appearance

4.20. The external appearance of a building can often be undervalued. In the Leisure Sector the customer experience is paramount. People need to want to visit the centre and it must therefore appeal to its customers. If it does not people will vote with their feet, perhaps visit less frequently or use a private alternative. The current external appearance of Maidstone LC is non-descript; it could be any building in almost any location. It does not help inspire good health.

4.21. The existing building also fails to exploit its location adjacent to Mote Park, with key areas of the building (e.g. café, fitness suite, studios) failing to take advantage of the views out onto the park and the potential connectivity with the outdoors and the Active Environment. There would be minimal scope for a refurbishment scheme to address these factors.

Summary

4.22. Taking into consideration the above factors and risks outlined above, it is recommended that Feasibility Option 1 does not represent best value to MBC and is not progressed.

A New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub with Co-located Community services (Feasibility Option 2)

4.23. A new Maidstone Leisure and Physical Activity Hub with Co-located Community Services is proposed for the borough on land adjacent to Mote Park. Feasibility options 2, 3, and 4 in Table 4.1 above all include a new leisure facility with co-located services as a minimum but with different variables. These alternative options are considered later in this report.

4.24. There are a number of planning constraints affecting the existing leisure centre location which are shown on Map 4.1 below. Most importantly, Mote Park is a registered Historic Park and Gardens (area coloured purple on plan) and there is also a designated Local Wildlife Site to the north and east of the site (area coloured green on plan) and a row of protected trees to the north along the boundary between Mote Park and the Rugby Ground (area hatched green on plan). Consideration therefore needs to be given to any loss of public open space, wildlife and tree habitats, and but also environmental impacts such as lighting, noise and views out to the North Downs.

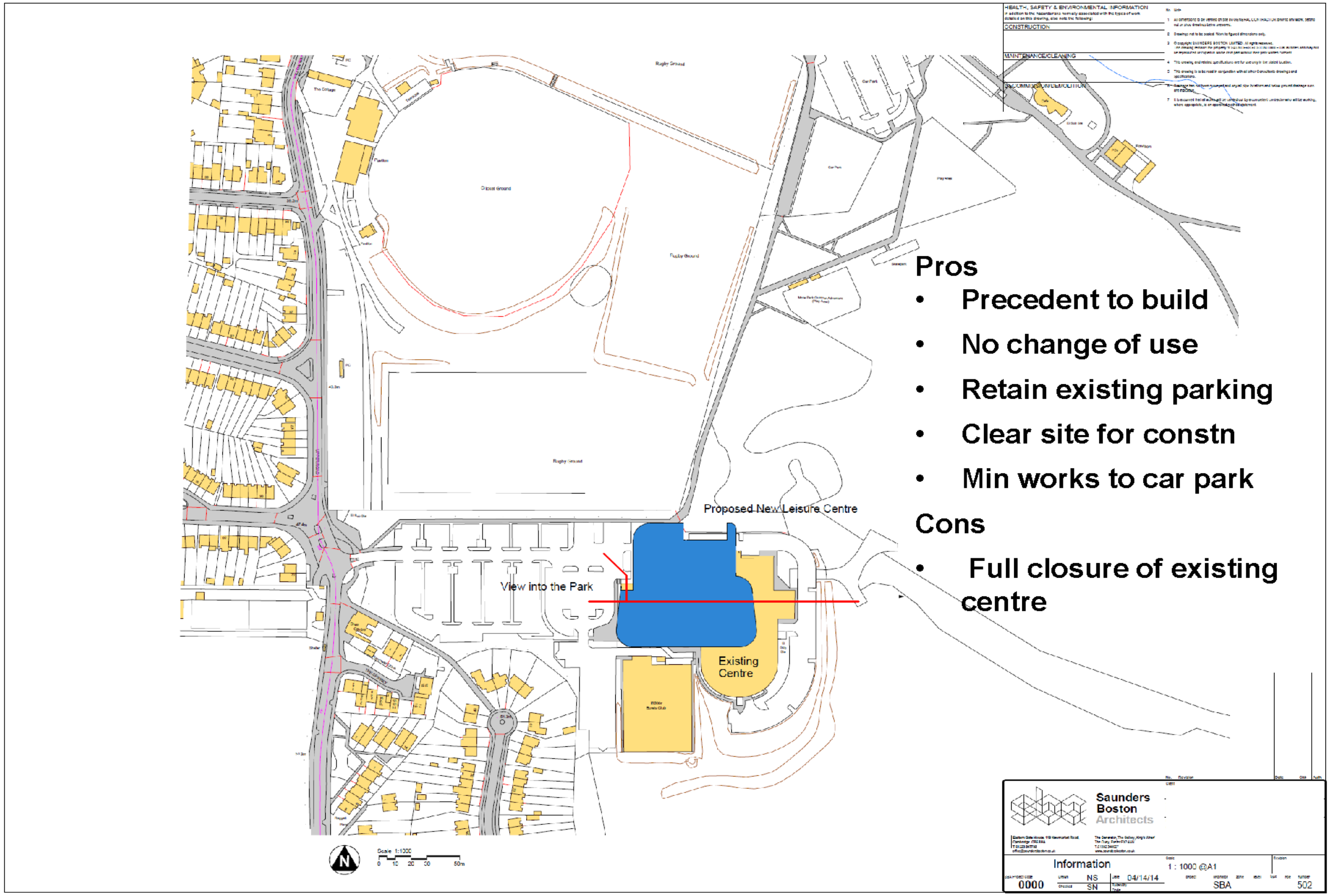
4.25. A number of indicative site options are being considered for a new Leisure and Physical Activity Hub adjacent to Mote Park as detailed below. Pre-Application Advice has been sought from Maidstone Planning and Development Team and their comments have been included for each option.

Map 4.1: Historic Park Map

Map 4.2: showing all 4 site options

Site Option 1 (Existing Site)

Map 4.3: showing Option 1 (Existing Site)



4.26. This site option is positioned where the existing leisure centre is currently located. The advantages to this option are that there is an existing precedent to build in this location, and no change of use from a planning perspective. The existing car park can be retained with minimal works required and there is a clear site for construction.

4.27. The key disadvantage of this option is that the existing leisure centre will be closed and demolished with no alternative provision for the public throughout the build period, which could be up to 2 years. This will have a significant negative impact on school and public swimming lessons, club use, and the overall health and wellbeing of residents who rely on the facility for their sport and physical activity. As Maidstone Leisure Centre is the only public leisure centre within the Borough, it will be difficult, and in some cases impossible to relocate all users and hirers to other sites locally. There will also be the difficulty of regaining their custom once the new leisure centre opens, and this may take a number of months, which will impact on the new leisure centre's business plan and income generation.

4.28. This location also creates a barrier between the car park and Mote Park, therefore preventing the opportunity to draw people towards 'the Jewel in Maidstone's Crown' and the beautiful landscapes and activities that it offers.

Pre-Application Advice from MBC Planning Team

4.29. This option would have a low impact being largely on the existing footprint. There would be a very small incursion into the boundaries of the Historic Park which must be avoided if this option is pursued.

4.30. There would be a small loss of land in Mote Park and so loss of recreation public open space (POS). National and local policy (DM19) requires that there is no net loss of POS and so this would need to be replaced or avoided.

4.31. The impact upon the setting of the Historic Park would be limited as it would be on a similar footprint and if the design quality was high there could potentially be a positive impact. It is likely some trees would be lost which should be replaced.

4.32. This option would mean there would be no leisure centre for a number of years, which is clearly a negative factor but this would not be a reason to refuse planning permission.

Site Option 2 (Car Park)

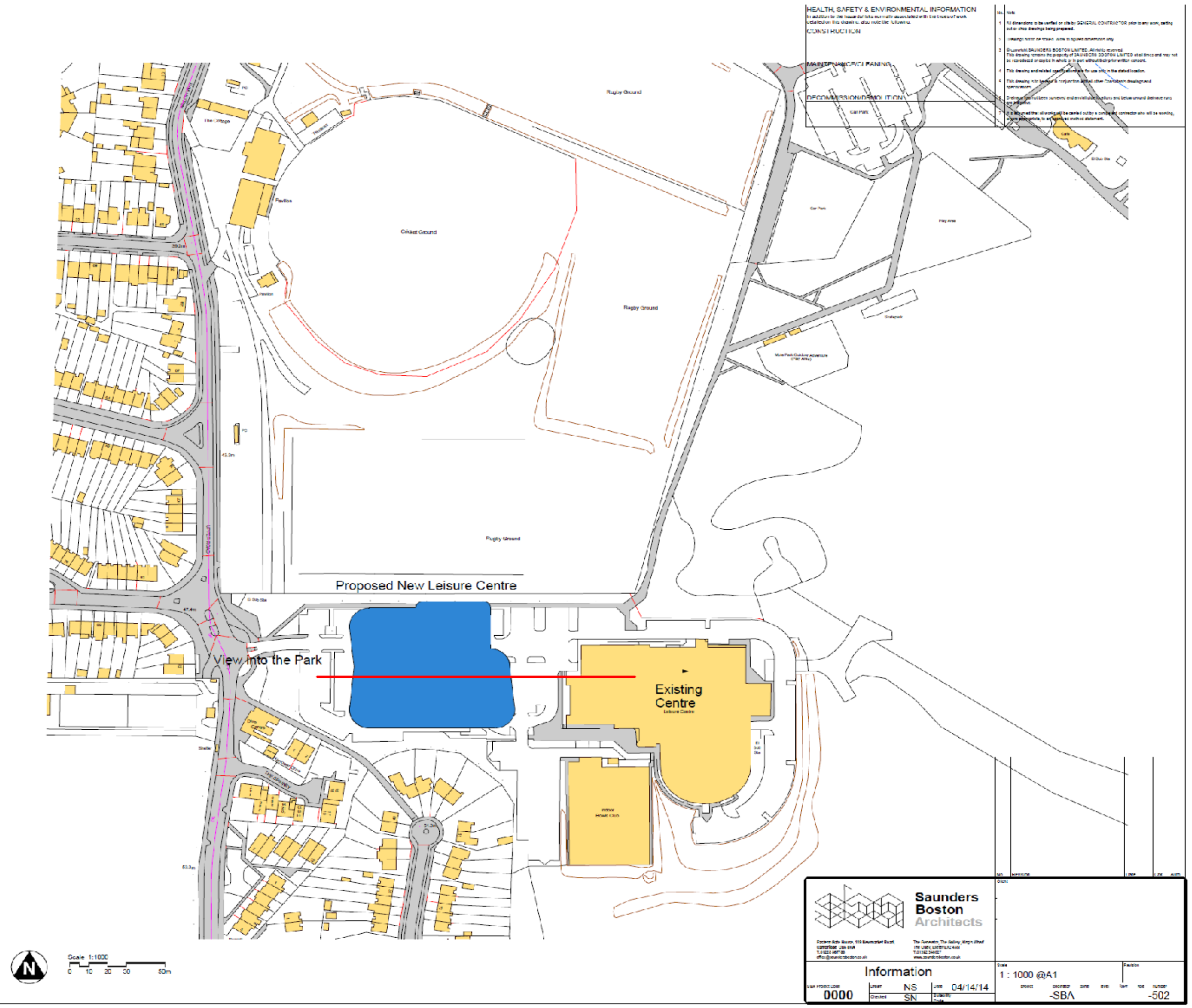
Map 4.4: showing Option 2 (Car Park)

Pros

- **Retain existing centre during build**
- **No loss of service?**
- **No change of use**
- **No impact on green space**

Cons

- **Loss of parking during build**
- **Parking will be behind the new centre**
- **Longer and more expensive**



4.33. The main advantage of this option is that the existing leisure centre can remain open whilst the new leisure centre is being built. However, there would be no public car parking available during the build, and since a high proportion of centre users travel by car to the site from across the Borough, this would severely restrict usage and impact on income. Once the new leisure was built, additional time would be required to demolish the old leisure centre and build a car park on the same site, leading to longer and more expensive overall construction period.

4.34. However, this option would involve no change of use and no impact on existing green space. The layout/design would be more elongated to ensure that it could be accommodated within the existing car park parameters.

4.35. As per site option 1, this location would create a barrier between the new facility and the park. A new access road would also need to be built for cars to drive round to the new car park located to the rear of the leisure centre. The leisure centre would have immediate views out to the new car park as opposed to Mote Park and there would be a loss of immediate integration/connection between the outdoor Active Environment and indoor facilities.

Pre-Application Advice from MBC Planning Team

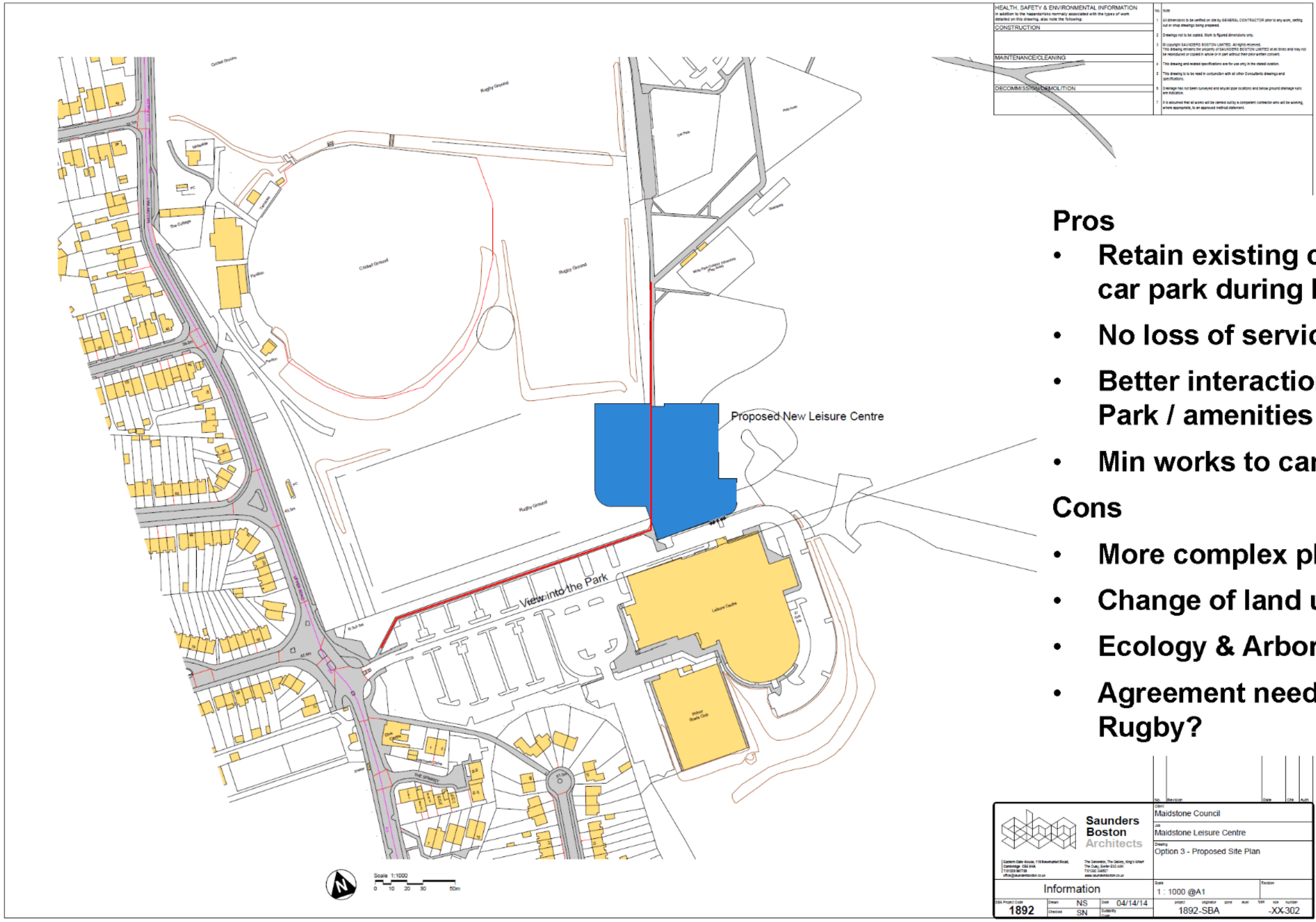
4.36. This option would have a low impact being within the existing car park and set well back from the Park. The impact upon the setting of the Historic Park is likely to be positive through the removal of the existing centre, provided the new car park to the east is well screened.

4.37. Trees would be lost in the car park and probably along its north boundary which should be replaced.

4.38. The new building would be relatively close to houses to the south (under 30m). It is a large building in terms of its span and height and I have concerns over the impact upon outlook and privacy and so this would need careful consideration.

Site Option 3 (Adjacent Site)

Map 4.5: Site Option 3 (Adjacent Site)



Pros

- **Retain existing centre & car park during build**
- **No loss of service**
- **Better interaction with Park / amenities**
- **Min works to car park**

Cons

- **More complex planning**
- **Change of land use?**
- **Ecology & Arboriculture**
- **Agreement needed with Rugby?**

4.39. This option utilises land currently owned by Mote Cricket Club and used by Mote Rugby Club for training. This option would therefore involve a potential change of land use and also encroach into the Historic Park and onto land designated as a Local Wildlife Site and with protected trees.

4.40. However, the main advantage of this site is that it would be possible to retain the existing leisure centre and car park during the build, so there would be no loss of service. There is also a better interaction between the leisure facility and the park, with the leisure facility not blocking the views of the park but drawing you towards the landscape and amenities. Minimal work to the existing car park would be required.

4.41. Further negotiation would be required between Mote Cricket Club and Mote Rugby Club on this option. There may be scope to link this project with the Club's aspirations to build a new pavilion on their site, to ensure that the two facilities complimented each other in terms of the facilities and activities on offer.

Pre-Application Advice from MBC Planning Team

4.42. This option would be to the north of the existing centre and extend into the Mote CC. It would protrude into the Historic Park, be within the LWS, result in the loss of protected and unprotected mature trees, and result in the loss of POS in the Park. It was confirmed that no loss of sports pitches would occur in Mote CC.

4.43. It is considered that there would be some harm to the Historic Park through having a large building within its boundaries. Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (such as the Historic Park) will require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 201 states that where 'substantial' harm is caused by a development it should be refused unless this harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. Paragraph 202 states that where 'less than substantial' harm is caused it should be weighed against the public benefits of the development. Public benefits can be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework. The benefits of providing a replacement facility in a location whereby the existing leisure centre can remain open could be given some limited weight.

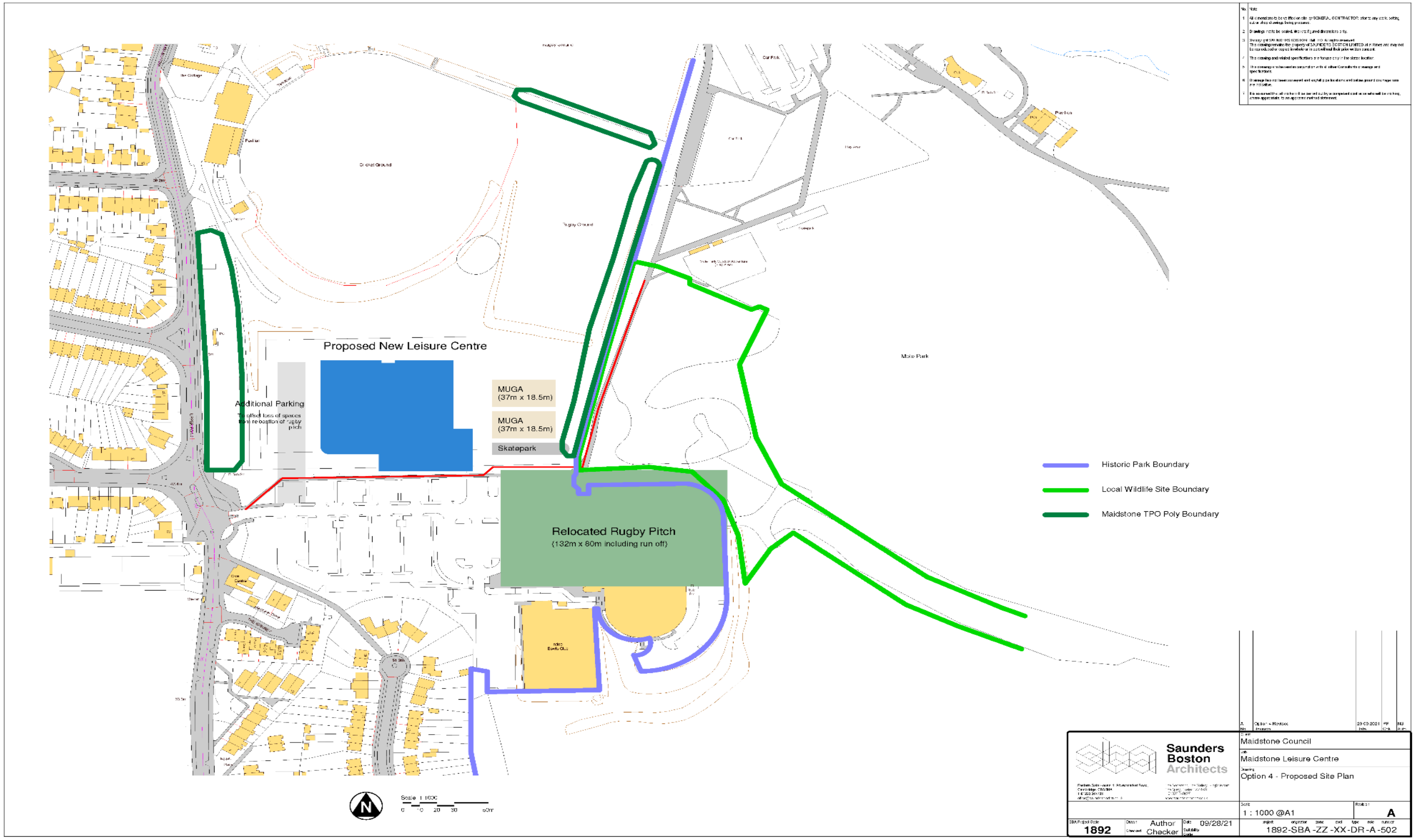
4.44. At this stage it is difficult to advise whether there would be 'substantial' or 'less than 'substantial' harm to the Historic Park in the absence of a Heritage Statement to assess the 'significance' of the Historic Park and a Heritage Impact Assessment to assess the impact the proposal would have. Whilst it would be on the edge of the Park and grouped near to other development it would develop over the historic boundary and result in the loss of mature trees which contribute to the character of the Park. The impact upon the setting of the Grade II listed Tabernacle to the west would also need to be considered. It is recommended that you engage a heritage consultant to advise on these matters.

4.45. In terms of the LWS, policy DM3 of the Local Plan states that "For local designated sites, development likely to have an adverse effect will be permitted only where the damage can be avoided or adequately mitigated or when its need outweighs the biodiversity interest of the site. Compensation will be sought for loss or damage to locally designated sites." This is part of the Mote Park and River Len LWS and it covers the whole of the Park apart from the areas with sports pitches and recreational land. It is suggested that the biodiversity value north of the existing centre is from the mature tree cover. The development will have an adverse impact on the LWS so if it cannot be avoided, compensation would be needed through providing at least an equivalent area elsewhere in the Park. Clearly, mature trees can only be replaced over the long term and so there is likely to be a negative impact upon biodiversity in the short to medium term. It is recommended that you engage an ecologist to advise on this matter.

4.46. The POS lost in the Park would need to be replaced and this could potentially be provided on the footprint of the existing centre.

Site Option 4 (Rugby Field)

Map 4.6: Site Option 4 (Rugby Field)



4.47. This option also utilises land currently owned by Mote Cricket Club but occupies the First Team Rugby Pitch. There would therefore be a requirement from Sport England and the RFU to re-provide this pitch elsewhere and ideally within close proximity to the existing site.

4.48. The key advantage of this option is that the new leisure centre would not encroach on the Historic Park, designated Local Wildlife Site or any protected trees. However, if the rugby pitch was to be relocated onto land currently occupied by the existing leisure centre, then there would be a slight encroachment of the pitch into the Historic Park and designated Local Wildlife Site.

4.49. This option retains the same other advantages as Option 3 above.

4.50. Map 4.6 also presents a couple of examples as to how the outdoor space adjacent to the new leisure centre could be utilised. A new skatepark for example, has been raise by Kent Youth Service as a facility that would be really beneficial for young people in the area.

4.51. Further negotiation would be required between Mote Cricket Club and Mote Rugby Club as this would impact on their own aspirations to have a dual aspect pavilion serving both the first team rugby pitch and cricket ground.

Pre-Application Advice from MBC Planning Team

4.52. This option would be to the north of the existing centre entirely within the Mote CC grounds. It would result in the loss of unprotected trees and would potentially have an impact upon the protected trees along the east boundary of Mote CC. It would result in the loss of the rugby pitch.

4.53. The impact upon the setting of the Historic Park is likely to be positive through the removal of the existing centre. The impact upon the setting of the Grade II listed Tabernacle to the west would need to be considered.

4.54. The loss of sports pitches would need to be replaced and you advised that this could be through a new pitch (possibly all-weather) on part of the footprint of the existing centre. This would have the potential to overcome policy DM19 but it would be important to provide robust landscaping to screen/soften its impact upon the Historic Park. Flood lighting would not be appropriate. You also suggested that in the short term whilst the development was taking place, a pitch could be provided for temporary use for rugby in the Park. This would not provide a replacement but would be a positive approach.

Summary of Location Options

4.55. It is clear that the above analysis, that there are a number of advantages and disadvantages to each location option available to MBC from both a planning, operational and design perspective. These can be summarised in the table below:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1 – Existing Site	Built on existing footprint – low impact No change of use Existing Car Park retained – minimal works Low impact on setting adjacent to Park	No leisure centre during build (up to 2 years) – loss of custom Small incursion onto Historic Park Small loss of land in Mote Park Loss of recreation Public Open Space Facility creates barrier between car park and Mote Park
Option 2 – Car Park	Existing facility remains open during build Building on car park – low impact/no change of use Positive impact upon setting of Historic Park if new car park screened	Existing car park closed during build – impact on usage/income Longer/more expensive construction period due to car park build Tree loss in cark park and northern boundary Closeness of new facility to existing housing New facility creates barrier between new facility and Park New access road required Views from new facility out across new car park rather than Mote Park
Option 3 – Adjacent Site	Retain existing leisure centre and car park during build Better interaction between new facility and Park Minimal work required on existing car park	Potential change of land use Dependency on negotiation with Mote Park Cricket/Mote Rugby Club Protrudes into Historic Park – harm to/loss of designated historic asset Located within the Local Wildlife Site – to be compensated for elsewhere Loss of Public Open Space Potential impact upon setting of Grade II listed Tabernacle

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 4 – Rugby Pitch	No encroachment of new Leisure Centre on Historic Park, or Local Wildlife Site Positive impact upon setting of Historic Park through removal of existing leisure centre Retain existing leisure centre and car park during build Better interaction between new facility and Park Minimal work required on existing car park	Loss of unprotected trees. Dependency on negotiation with Mote Park Cricket/Mote Rugby Club Potential loss of protected trees on eastern boundary Re-provision of rugby pitch on footprint of existing leisure centre would create slight encroachment into Historic Park and Local Wildlife Site. No floodlighting allowed for re-provided rugby pitch in proposed location Potential impact upon setting of Grade II listed Tabernacle

4.56. Following an assessment of the above, it is recommended that further feasibility work is undertaken in respect of Site Option 4 as the preferred option, and that officers engage with Mote Park Cricket Club and Rugby Club at the earliest opportunity.

4.57. A new Leisure and Physical Activity Hub with Co-located Community Services adjacent to Mote Park will:

- **Contribute towards addressing the current and future leisure and physical activity needs of the growing population of Maidstone, and reducing health inequalities**
- **Provide high quality, sustainable and cost effective sport and leisure facilities**
- **Provide better cohesion/integration between the leisure centre, the adjacent park and sports clubs, blending in with its surrounding natural environment.**
- **Contribute towards the Council's carbon reduction agenda through the provision of an energy efficient building and provision of Active Travel (walking and Cycling)**
- **Provide accessible sport and physical activity provision close to wards of highest deprivation in the Borough**

- **A holistic approach to community health and wellbeing by offering co-located services on the same site (e.g. Adult Mental Health, Youth Service support services), providing opportunities for greater partnership working between organisations**
- **Put physical activity at the heart of our thinking (social prescribing and GP referrals)**
- **Provide for both formal and informal sport and physical activity**
- **Address the needs of key priority groups i.e. young people, older people, families**
- **Develop partnerships with Kent County Council, NHS, the Third Sector and National Governing Bodies of Sport**
- **Based on insight and community engagement, change behaviours at a local level by improving relevance and quality, taking away barriers, increasing access, creating opportunities and raising expectations.**

4.58. Based on the above insight, consultation and identified facility provision in the borough, the following recommendations are made for the future provision of a Leisure and Physical Activity Hub in Maidstone

Existing Maidstone Leisure Centre	New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub
25m x 6 lane main pool with no spectator seating	• 25m x 8 lane competition pool. • There is currently no competition size facility in Kent and the new Hub would be centrally located to serve the County, providing more than 4 regional competitions per annum. • Maidstone's Sports Facility Strategy Review (Nov 2020) identifies a shortfall in future pool provision (equivalent of 25m x 6 lanes) to meet population growth. These additional 2 lanes will contribute towards meeting this shortfall. • The size meets competition requirements but the main benefit is the ability to subdivide it into lanes or widths suitable to maximising activity programming. For example, early morning club training and customer lane swimming or daytime school lessons and casual bathing or after school fun sessions and swimming lessons. • Spectator provision (200 spaces) – permanent provision should be limited as it is a non-income generating space, but sufficient to cater for swim competitions/galas. Most modern pools provide some limited seating adjacent to the learner pool/or seating in a café area over-looking the pool, and there is the ability to bring in seating for a gala.
2 x learner/training pools (9m x 9m)	• 25m x 4 lane Training Pool with moveable floor. • Swimming lessons are second in the hierarchy of income generation so all operators are keen to maximise lesson space. The floor can be set at any depth between zero

Existing Maidstone Leisure Centre	New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub
	(overnight energy saving pool cover) and 1.6m. Sensible programming makes this pool suitable for non-swimming babies and toddlers, junior learn to swim lessons, improvers lessons, diving, artistic swimming, adult aquacise classes, casual or lane swimming etc • The competition pool and training pool allows for the continued expansion of the swim lesson programme which was already very successful pre-covid (2,000 members) • The new Hub would provide better spectator viewing for the Training Pool to allow parents to watch their children during lessons. • The size of the pool allows continued use for different activities, even when the competition pool is being used for galas
Diving Pool	• No stand-alone diving pool to be provided. • The existing pool is used for diving by the swimming club in the evenings and by the public at the weekends, however, the facility remains relatively unused the rest of the time. • Swim England considers learn to swim, competition and swimming for health to be the priority (easily accessible for all age groups) and that a diving pool is not needed all the time. There is the opportunity to have a training pool with moveable floor to address diving and artistic swimming requirements.
Indoor Leisure Pool	• Indoor and outdoor Splash Pads • Offers smaller leisure water provision targeting young families, offering range of fun features but with lower operating costs • This follows recent trends which prioritise swim lesson and lane swimming/swim exercise programmes. • Indoor and outdoor splash pad opens out the facility to its neighbouring park environment. Its adjacency to the café encourages longer day visits, particularly in the summer months.
Café located within the main pool hall	• Café with 60+ covers located overlooking the park, and accessible to park users and visitors to the Hub. • The location and size are the most important aspects of this service. • The café is located close to the Soft Play/Tag Active space as well as the Community Room. Both areas could be hired out for parties, therefore catering for the family market.
Mixed village style wet changing facilities including family and group changing	• Larger village style change plus group change, conforming to safeguarding guidance. Fully inclusive to meet the needs of disability groups. Inclusion of Changing Places room ideally accessible for both wet side and dry side.

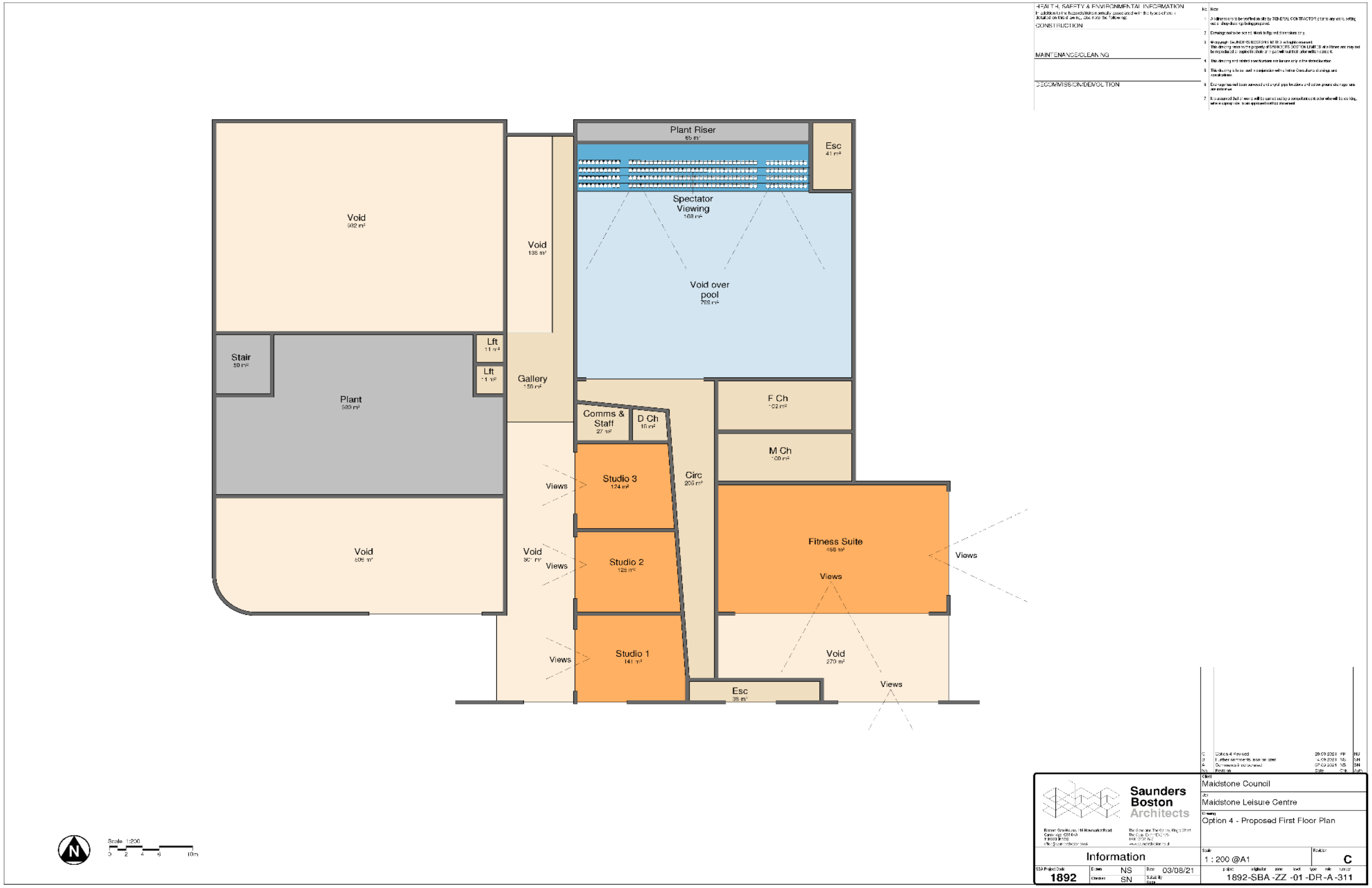
Existing Maidstone Leisure Centre	New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub
6 court sports hall/concert venue	• Retain 6 court sports hall as a minimum and relocate concert venue to allow increased casual and sports club use at weekends. • Maidstone's Sports Facility Strategy Review (Nov 2020) identifies a shortfall in community accessible sports hall provision in the Borough, which is exacerbated by the use of the space as a concert venue.
3 studios	• Retain 3 studios but have these all located on the same floor and close to the Health and Fitness Suite so that there is shared relationship between the spaces. • One of these studios to be a dedicated spin studio. • Option to make one of the studios into a Shapemasters studio offering power assisted gentle exercise equipment in a quieter environment to the main gym, targeting the older age group and those with specific health conditions. • Opportunity for one of the studios to look out onto the park, therefore providing a relaxing and inviting environment for exercise e.g. yoga.
100 station fitness suite located over 3 floors	• Retain a similar size fitness suite but in one location on the first floor. • Fitness suite offering attractive views overlooking the park, linking the outdoor active environment with the indoor environment.
Creche/Soft Play within Pool Hall	• New soft play targeting families with children under 5. Also include Tag Active facility offering fun activities for the teenage market. • Both facilities located close to entrance to the Hub to draw people into the facility. • No longer located within the humid pool hall environment, but close to the cafe
Other design features • Lack of linkage/connection with the adjacent Mote Park	• The open internal 'street' design provides a route through the building for people using the park. The orientation of the facility takes advantage of the views, encouraging people to make the most of both the indoor and outdoor active environment. • Greater opportunities to connect to adjacent sports clubs and Mote Park Outdoor Adventure • Use of building materials that blend in with the neighbouring park e.g. imitation wooden cladding, green 'Living Wall' etc. A more compact building design which occupies a smaller overall space.
• Poor internal/external disability access	• Disabled parking bays close to the Hub and easy access to the reception and around the building. Building to be DDA and Equality Act compliant. Use of Changing Places Room, IFI compliant equipment in gym etc.

Existing Maidstone Leisure Centre	New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub
• No shared space creating partnership opportunities and encouraging use by hard to reach groups • Ageing, inefficiently designed building with large carbon footprint	• The Hub is intended to encouraging people to visit that would normally not consider going into a leisure facility environment. The inclusion of a community space allows an opportunity for organisations that work with hard to reach groups to base themselves in a less formal setting. Kent and Medway Adult Mental Health Services and Kent youth Service have already expressed interest in the Hub scheme. • A building design which makes economical use of space and modern energy efficient plant and equipment to reduce both the Council's carbon footprint and operational costs.

Indicative Layout Plan for New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub with Co-located Community services

Map 4.7: Indicative Layout Plan for new Leisure and Physical Activity Hub – Ground Floor

Map 4.8: Indicative Layout Plan for new Leisure and Physical Activity Hub – First Floor


HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION
CONSTRUCTION
MAINTENANCE/CLEANING
DECOMMISSIONING/DEMOLITION
Plant Riser
Esc
Spectator Viewing
Void over pool
Void
Stair
Plant
Lft
Lft
Gallery
F Ch
M Ch
Comms & Staff
D Ch
Circ
Studio 3
Studio 2
Studio 1
Fitness Suite
Views
Void
Esc
Void
Scale 1:200
C Option 4 Revised 29.09.2021
B Further comments incorporated 14.09.2021
A Comments incorporated 07.09.2021
Saunders Boston Architects
Client Maidstone Council
Job Maidstone Leisure Centre
Drawing Option 4 - Proposed First Floor Plan
Information
Scale 1 : 200 @A1
Revision C
SBA Project Code 1892
Drawn NS
Checked SN
Date 03/08/21
1892-SBA-ZZ-01-DR-A-311

New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub supported by Outreach Service/Provision in Rural Villages (Feasibility Option 3)

4.59. MBC has clearly demonstrated a commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of its residents. As a minimum, the Council wishes to see accessible community sport and leisure facilities, places and spaces. This should include both formal and informal spaces (e.g. community halls) in which to play sport and be physically active, as well as improved access to green spaces.

4.60. Although approximately 70% of the current Maidstone population live in the urban centre, the borough is largely rural and consultation suggests that people living outside the town do not necessarily identify with the town. Rural areas often suffer from poor public transport, and with limited access to local services, this can have a negative impact on an individual's health and wellbeing, often leading to other issues such as loneliness and social isolation. This can affect both young people and the elderly living in rural areas.

4.61. There is a great deal of formal and informal sport and physical activity currently being delivered at a local level by third sector and voluntary organisations (e.g. Active Kent), charities (e.g. MLT), parish councils and local sports clubs, and volunteer networks (e.g. Medway Valley Countryside Network volunteering). Often, the difficulty is in raising community awareness of these activities and services to help encourage participation. There are also existing community spaces in rural areas available to deliver a range of health and physical activities and services where gaps in provision exist.

4.62. In addition to providing a new Leisure and Physical Activity Hub in Maidstone, there is an opportunity for the Council to help further support the provision of accessible health and physical activities and services in rural areas by:

- Building on existing outreach work through improved co-ordination and collaboration against shared outcomes
- Launch 'Healthy Maidstone' webpage or similar, giving prominence on Council website. Webpage/site to provide info on exploring the outdoors, getting active, healthy living info, events etc. Links to key services/activities in local/rural areas and organisations such as Involve Kent, Active Kent, MLT, Volunteering networks etc. Links to other Council webpages on hiring community centres, hiring football pitches etc.
- Map existing provision to identify gaps in health and physical activity in rural areas and availability of indoor/outdoor community space to deliver a programme e.g. schools, community centres, care homes etc.
- As part of re-procurement of the Council's Leisure Management Contract, include the delivery of an outreach programme in rural areas as part of a co-ordinated approach to increasing physical activity using existing built infrastructure and the great outdoors. This programme to be based on the gap analysis and agreed shared outcomes. The programme need not be too prescriptive but allow the contractor to interpret the brief and come up with creative solutions to achieving the shared outcomes. Key performance indicators (KPI's) for outreach delivery to be included in the contract against which the contractor will be monitored.
- MBC to continue to support existing providers of outreach sport and physical activity provision through small grants schemes, collaboration on key projects, raising of awareness of what services/facilities are available in local communities etc.

New Leisure and Physical Activity Hub and a separate New Leisure Centre (Feasibility Option 4)

4.63. At the time of writing MBC's Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG) Diagnostic (February 2021), new housing development identified in the Council's Local Plan Review (up to three garden villages of approximately 5,000 homes), was predominantly planned for the south of the borough, approximately 10 – 15 miles away from Maidstone Leisure Centre. The SOPG Diagnostic therefore recommended that further feasibility work be carried out on the option of providing a separate new leisure centre to serve the new communities in the south of the borough.

4.64. However, in 2019 the Council invited proposals for garden communities within the Borough. In response it received 7 proposals across the borough. These were then assessed and two have been chosen for inclusion in the spatial strategy. These are Lidsing and Heathlands Garden Communities.

4.65. Lidsing Garden Community is situated in the north of the Borough adjacent to the boundary with Medway Council. Access to the site can be gained from the strategic road network via the M2 junction 4. The site is to be delivered over a 15 year period starting in 2027. It is anticipated that Maidstone Leisure Centre or leisure centres in Gillingham will serve this community.

4.66. Heathlands Garden Community is a mixed community of 5,000 residential units and 5,000 jobs promoted jointly by Homes England and Maidstone Borough Council. The site is between the villages of Lenham in Maidstone Borough and Charing in Ashford Borough, but the site is within Maidstone borough's administrative boundary. The site has vehicular access to the A20 corridor and potential for a new rail station on the South-eastern Maidstone Line between Ashford and Maidstone. The site is to be delivered over a 25year period starting in 2030. The need for investment in leisure facilities is included in the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) so will be reflected in the Local Plan. This will include spaces for sport, leisure and recreation, a community hub and focus on Active Travel (walking and cycling).

4.67. Regardless of the above proposed housing developments proposed in the north and east of the borough, there is the perception from residents who live in the south of the borough that there is very little leisure provision currently available where they live.

4.68. Although he Maidstone FPM National Runs for swimming and sports halls (2020) does suggest a current shortfall in provision, only the swimming data shows that there is unmet demand for swimming in the south of the district. The MBC Sports Facility Strategy review 2020 also identifies the future need for the equivalent of a 25m x 6 lane swimming pool and 2.05 four-badminton court sports halls but does not identify where in the borough these should be located.

4.69. Consideration should also be given to plans for new leisure facility provision in neighbouring authorities, as residents will chose to use their nearest leisure centre regardless of local authority boundaries.

4.70. An SOPG Diagnostic report has recently been completed for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The report identifies:

- ***The need for a replacement for Putlands Sports Centre to better address the needs and new communities in the north of the borough. Putlands Leisure Centre does not provide a pool, is an ageing facility and is in the wrong location in terms of access to new housing developments.***

- ***Replacing the existing facility creates the opportunity to consider opportunities for co-location with other indoor/outdoor physical activities as well as a range of community services. There is also potential to consider hoe a replacement facility can better contribute to the overall priorities for health and wellbeing in the borough, and to the development of an active environment.***

- ***In order to ensure enhanced accessibility for the Paddock Wood catchment area, which will see new homes developed in two strategic sites- Paddock Wood and east Capel (c. 3,490-3,590 homes up to 2038) and Tudeley Village (2,100 homes up to 2038, 2,800 in total), a replacement facility will need to be relocated. The optimum site for a new community physical activity facility is in east Capel.***

- ***The facility mix for a new facility has yet to be confirmed. However, the report identifies the need for a 50m pool to serve the new communities in Tunbridge Wells.***

4.71. There is therefore an opportunity to work together with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, with the intention that a new physical activity facility in Paddock Wood and east Capel, serve both the new homes in the north of Tunbridge Wells and residents living in the south of Maidstone. On this basis, MBC could provide developer contributions towards the provision of a new physical activity facility in Paddock Wood and east Chapel and a similar arrangement with Medway Council, where the replacement Splashes Leisure Centre would serve Maidstone's new Lidsing Garden Community.

Disclaimer

Forecasts and recommendations in any proposal, report or letter produced by SLL or their sub-consultants are made in good faith and on the basis of the information before the Company at the time. Their achievement must depend, among other things, on effective co-operation of the Client and the Client's staff. In any consequence, no statement in any proposal, report or letter is to be deemed to be in any circumstances a representation, undertaking, warranty or contractual condition.

Saunders Boston Architects

Maidstone Leisure Centre

22nd September 2021

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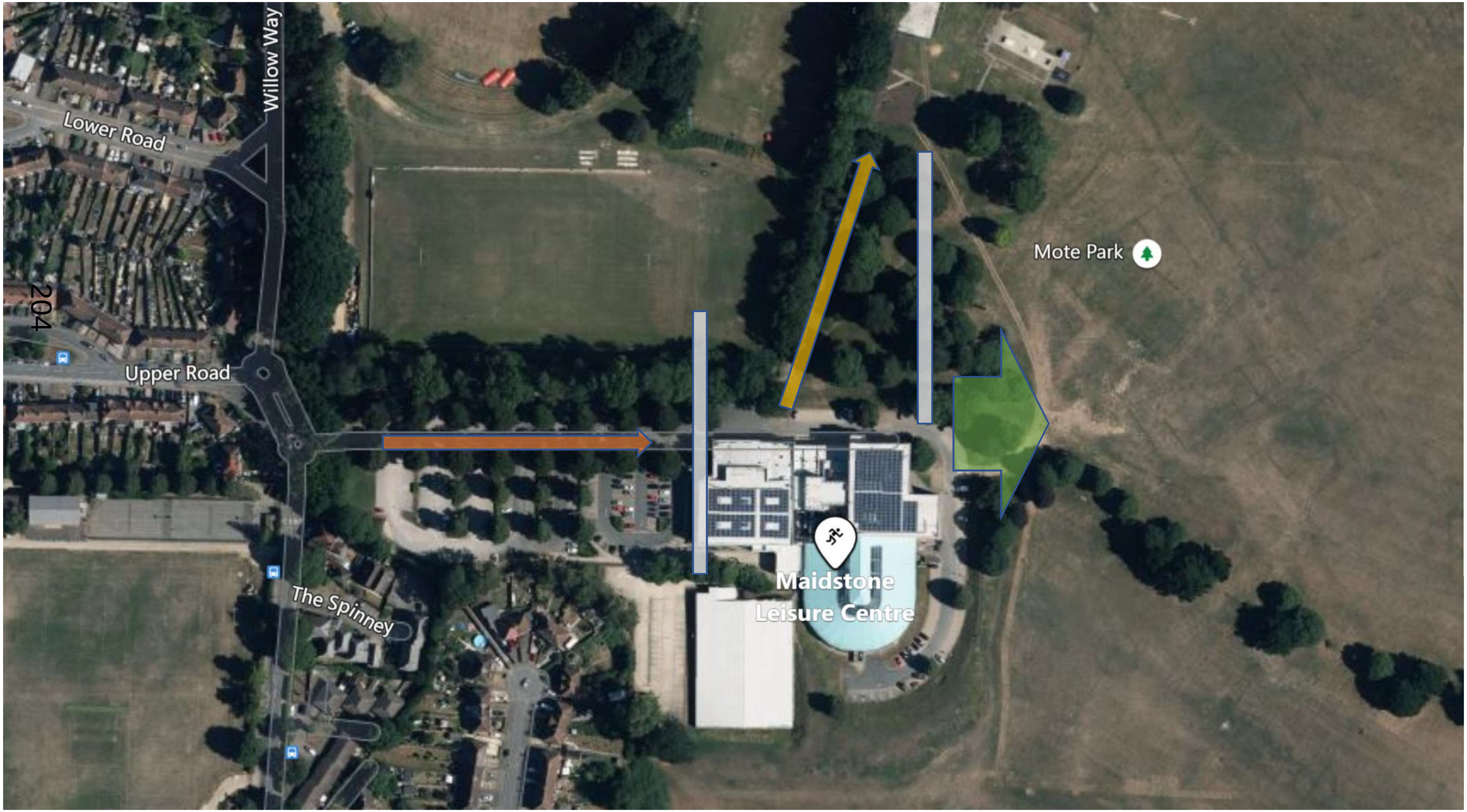
Maidstone Leisure Centre - Existing



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Maidstone Leisure Centre – Potential Site Options

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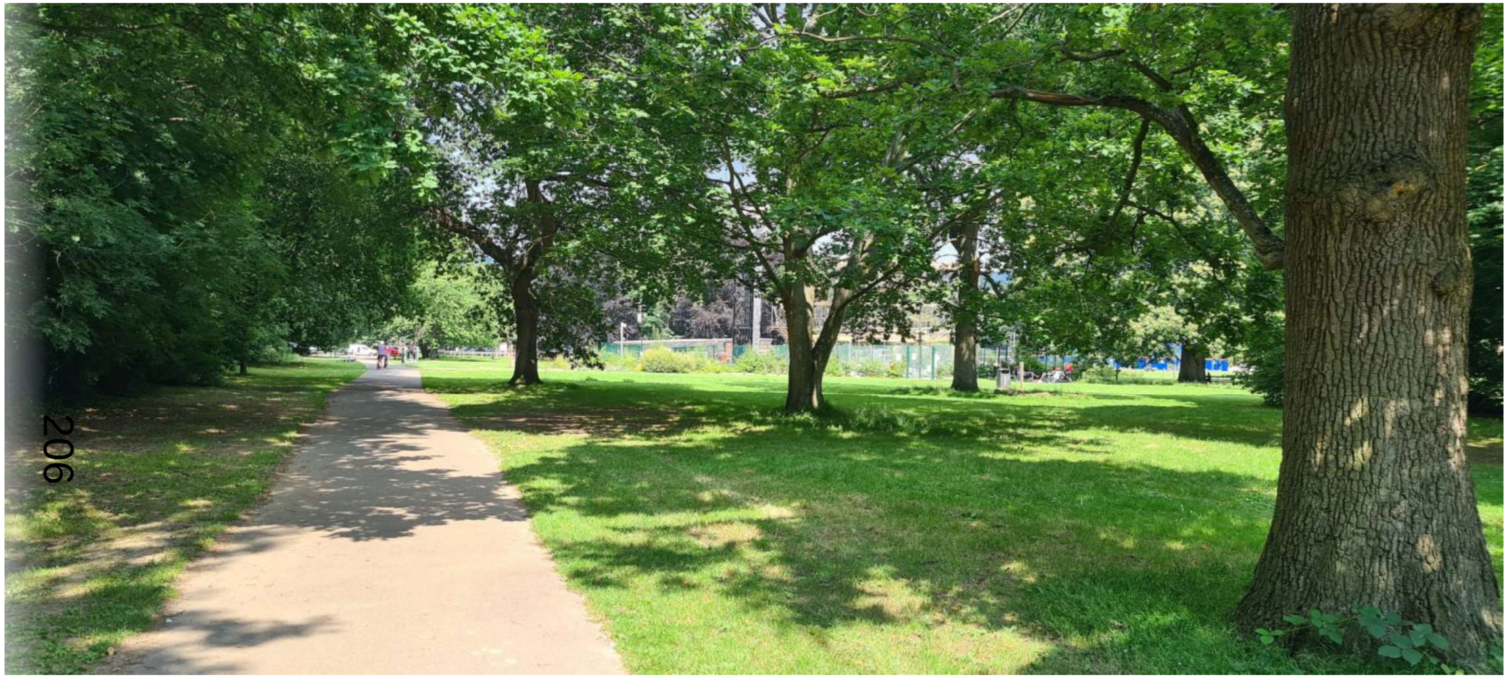
Maidstone Leisure Centre



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Maidstone Leisure Centre

Outline Brief

- **8 Lane 25m Regional Short Course Swimming Pool**
- **Spectator Seating** (200 spaces) plus pool side
- **4 Lane 25m Training Pool**
- **Modest indoor Splash pad**
- **Potential for further Outdoor Splash Pad**
- **Six Court Sports Hall**
- **Soft Play / Tag Active Space**
- **Community Space**
- **Café**
- **Three Studio Spaces**
- **100 Station Fitness Suite** (based on 4.5m2 per station)
- **Associated, Admin, Kitchen, Change & Storage**

Responding to the site

- **No loss of Service**
- **Maximizing Park Location (Views)**
- **Responding to Park setting (Materials & Volume)**
- **Environmental Agenda**
- **Linking the Park**

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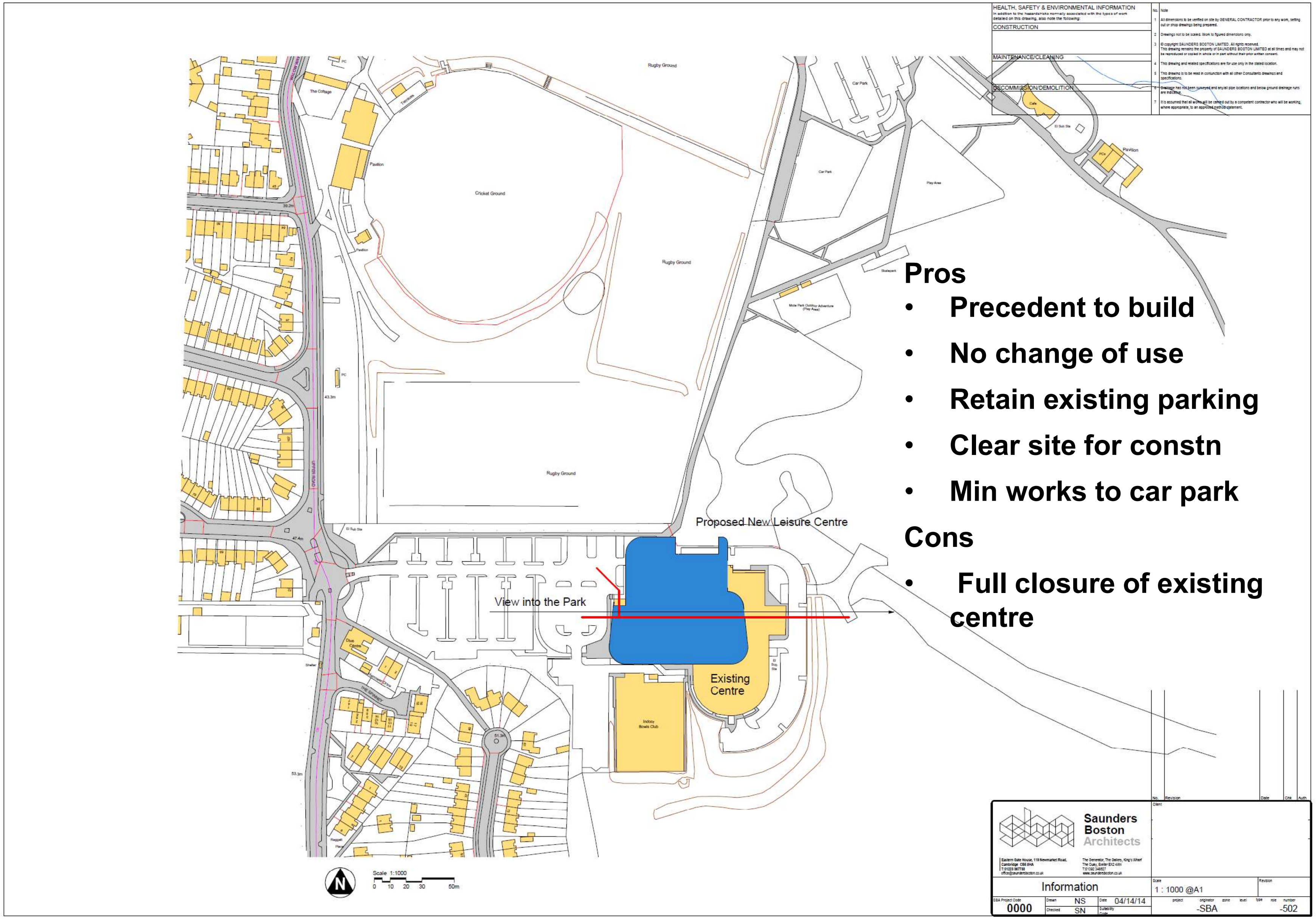
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 1 (Existing Site)



Pros

- **Precedent to build**
- **No change of use**
- **Retain existing parking**
- **Clear site for constn**
- **Min works to car park**

Cons

- **Full closure of existing centre**

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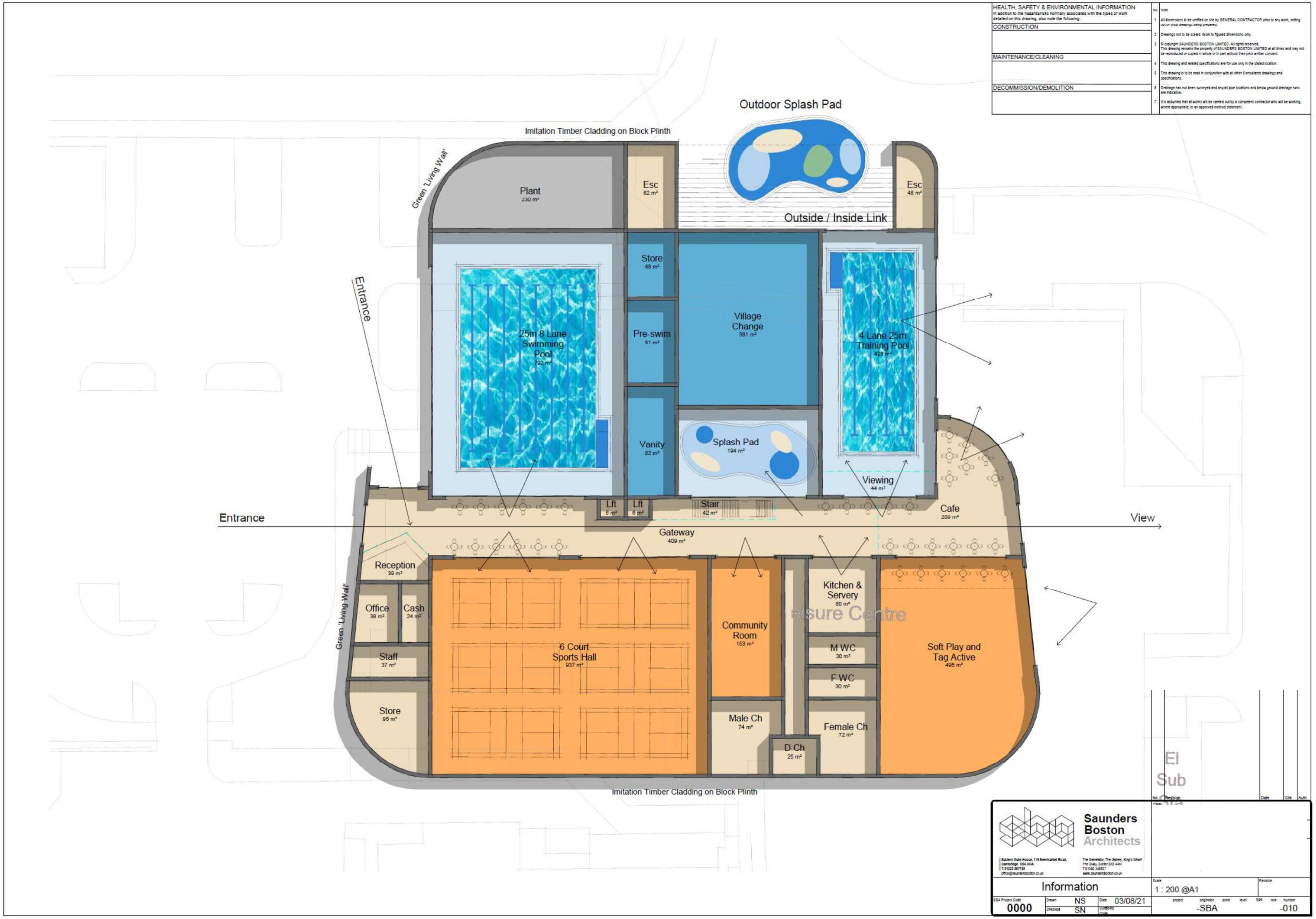
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 1 (Existing Site)



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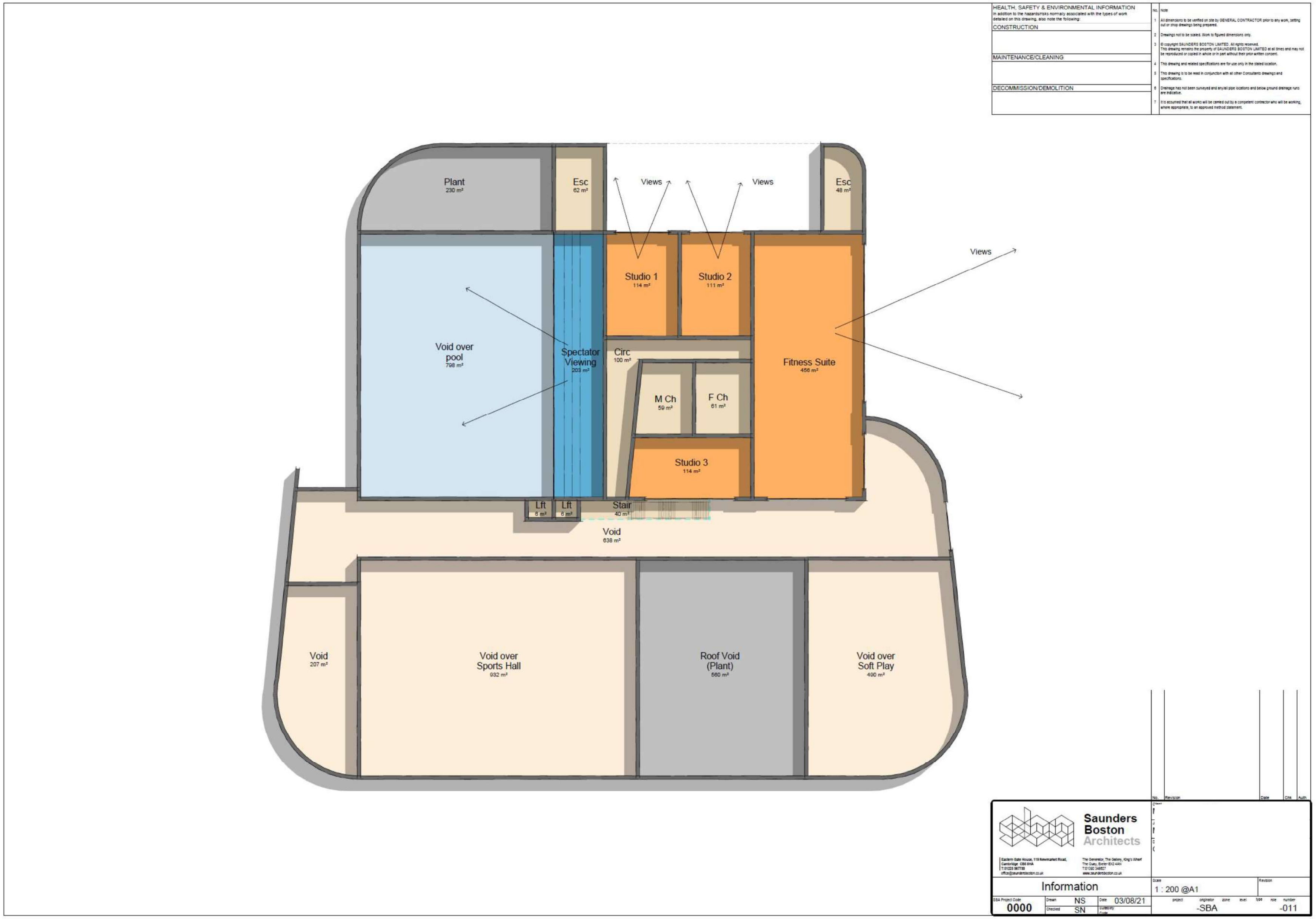
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 1 (Existing Site)



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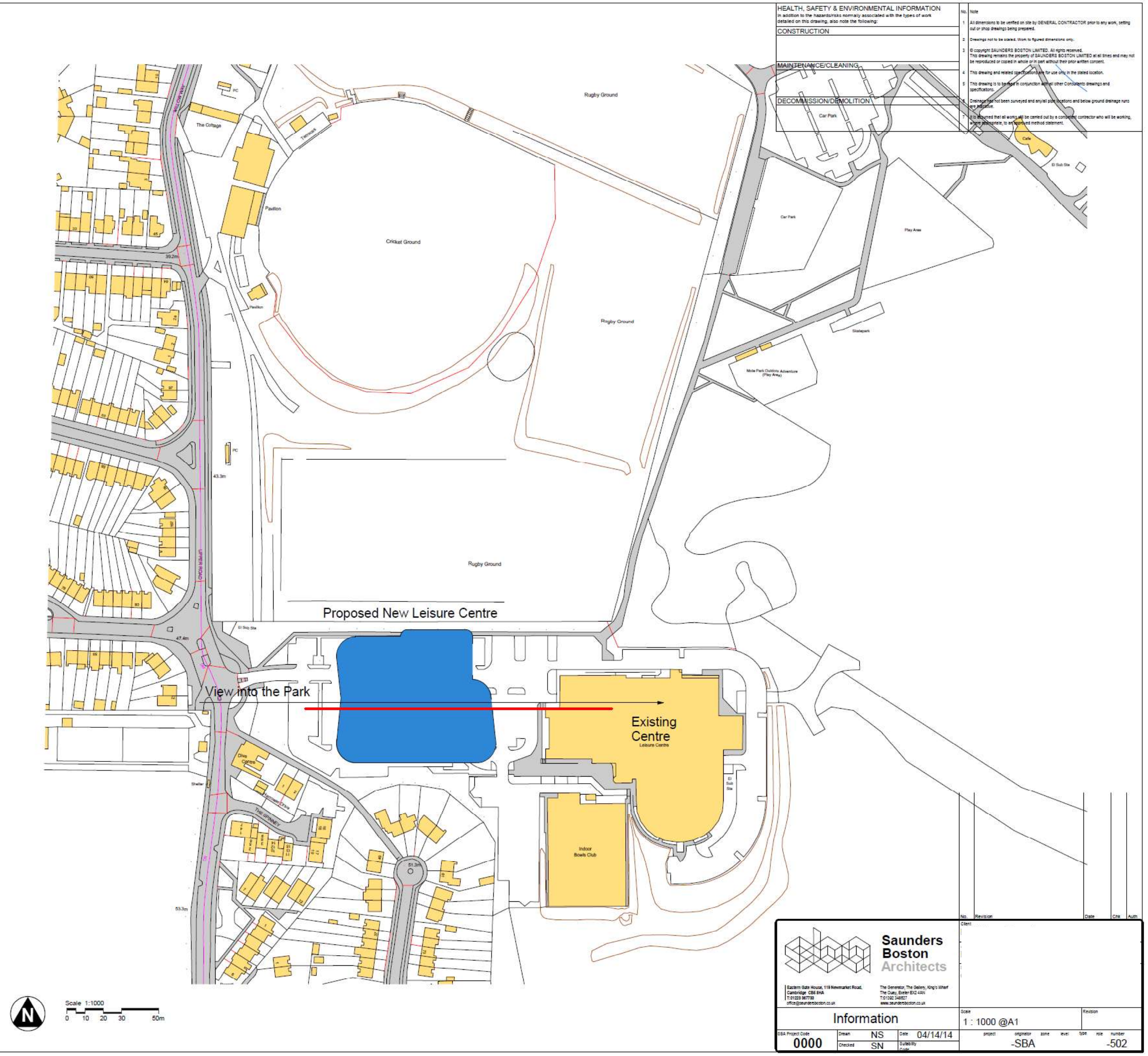
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 2 (Car Park)



Pros

- Retain existing centre during build
- No loss of service?
- No change of use
- No impact on green space

Cons

- Loss of parking during build
- Parking will be behind the new centre
- Longer and more expensive

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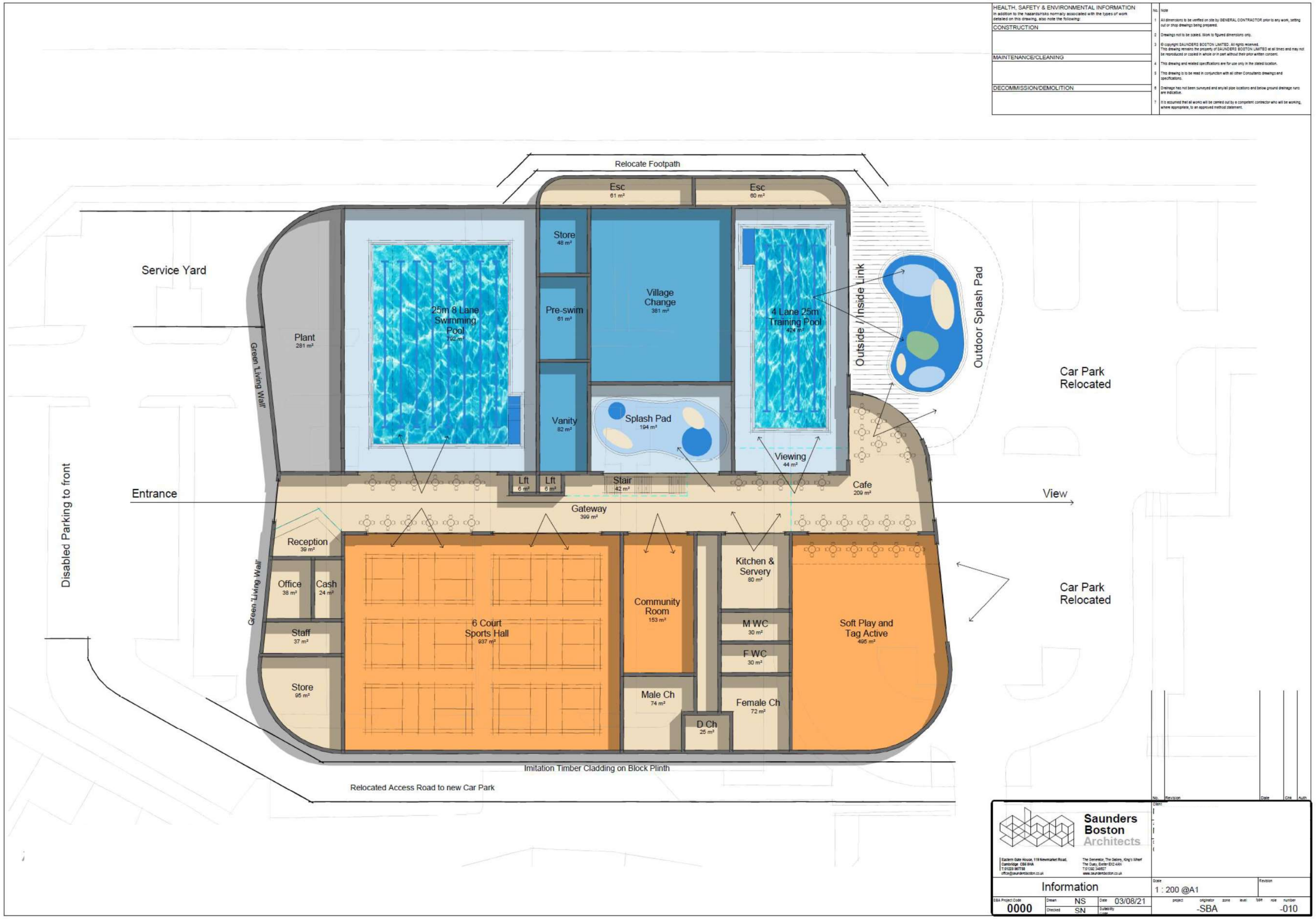
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 2 (Car Park)

212



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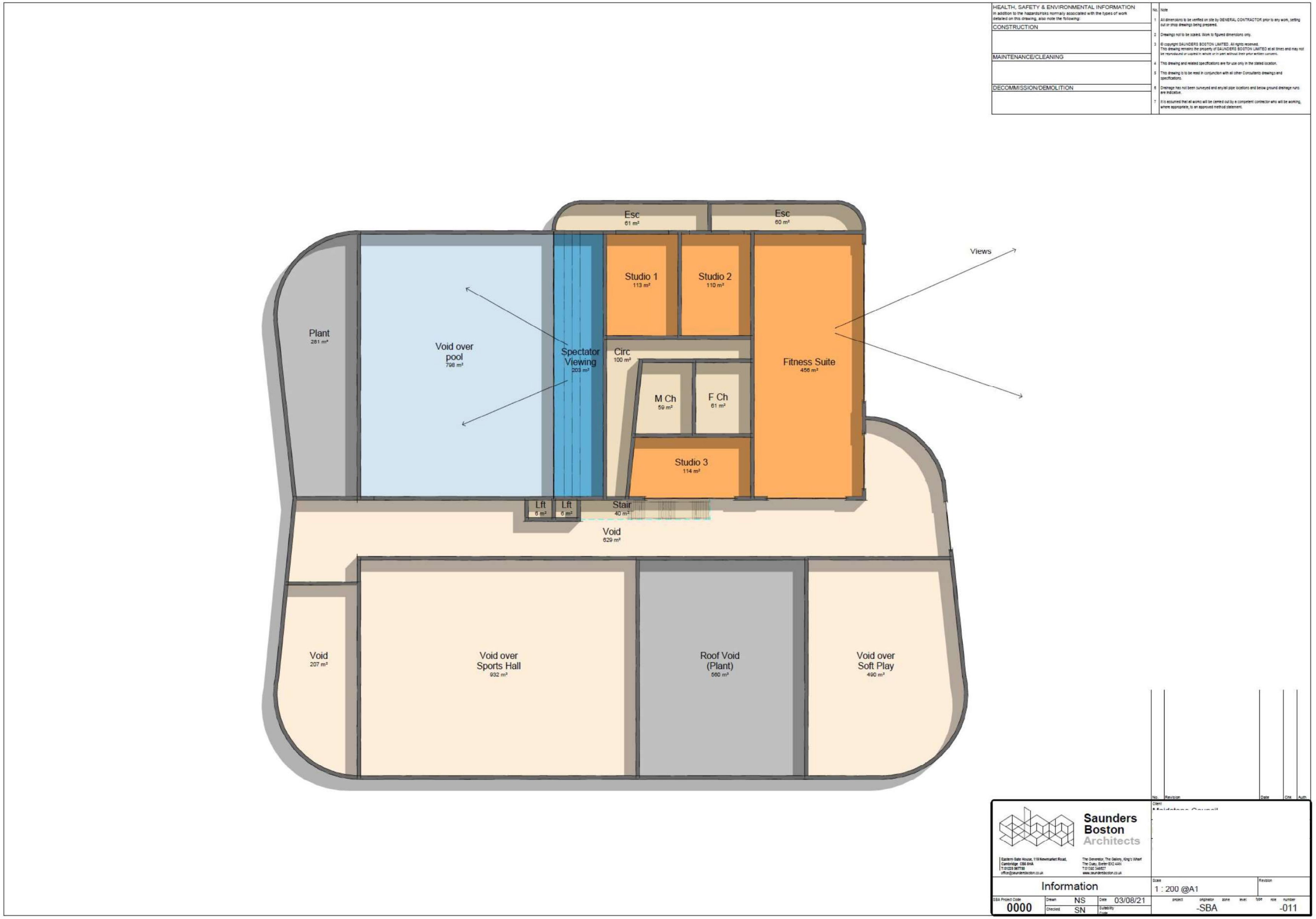
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 2 (Car Park)



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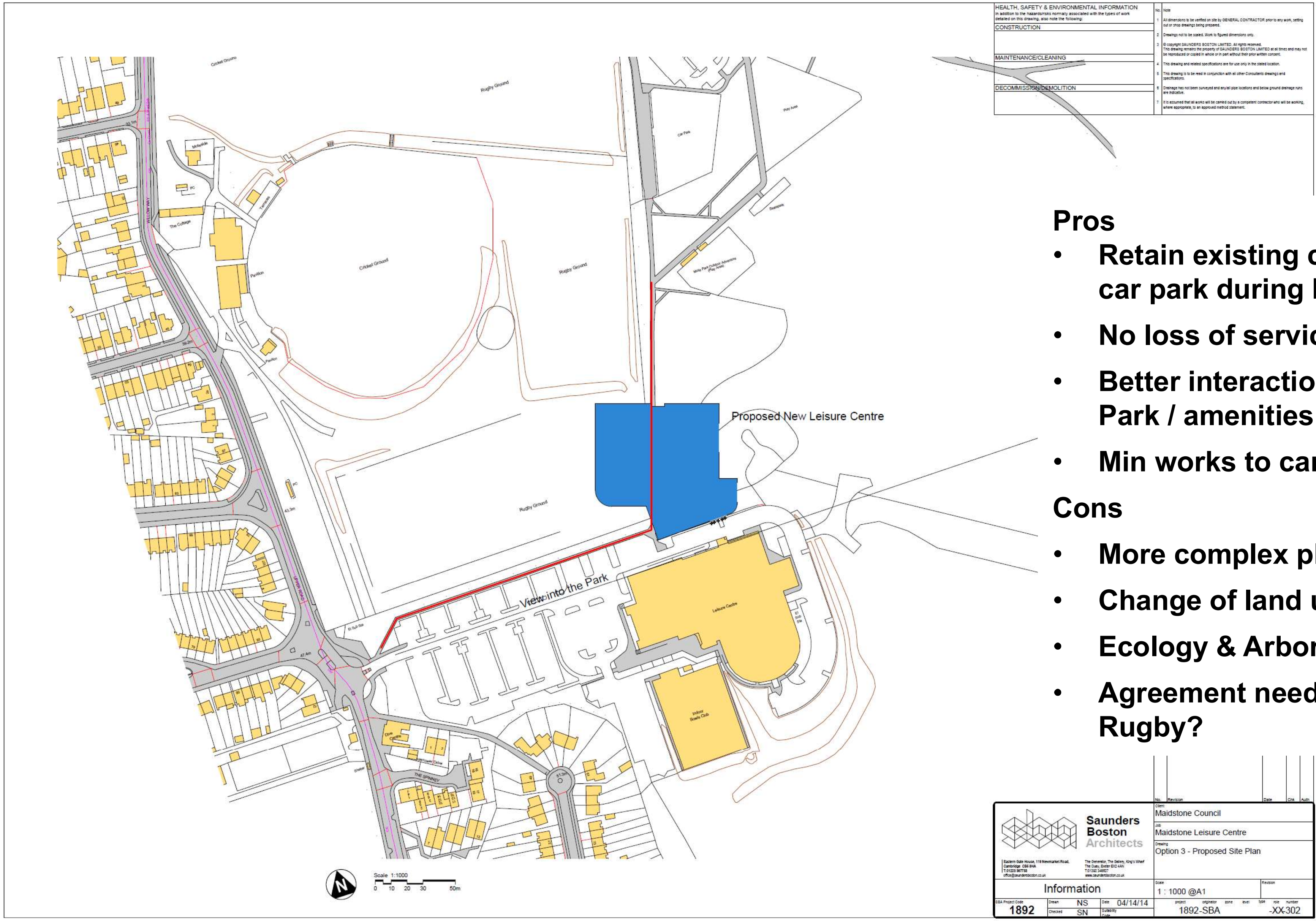
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 3 (Adjacent Site)

214



Pros

- Retain existing centre & car park during build
- No loss of service
- Better interaction with Park / amenities
- Min works to car park

Cons

- More complex planning
- Change of land use?
- Ecology & Arboriculture
- Agreement needed with Rugby?

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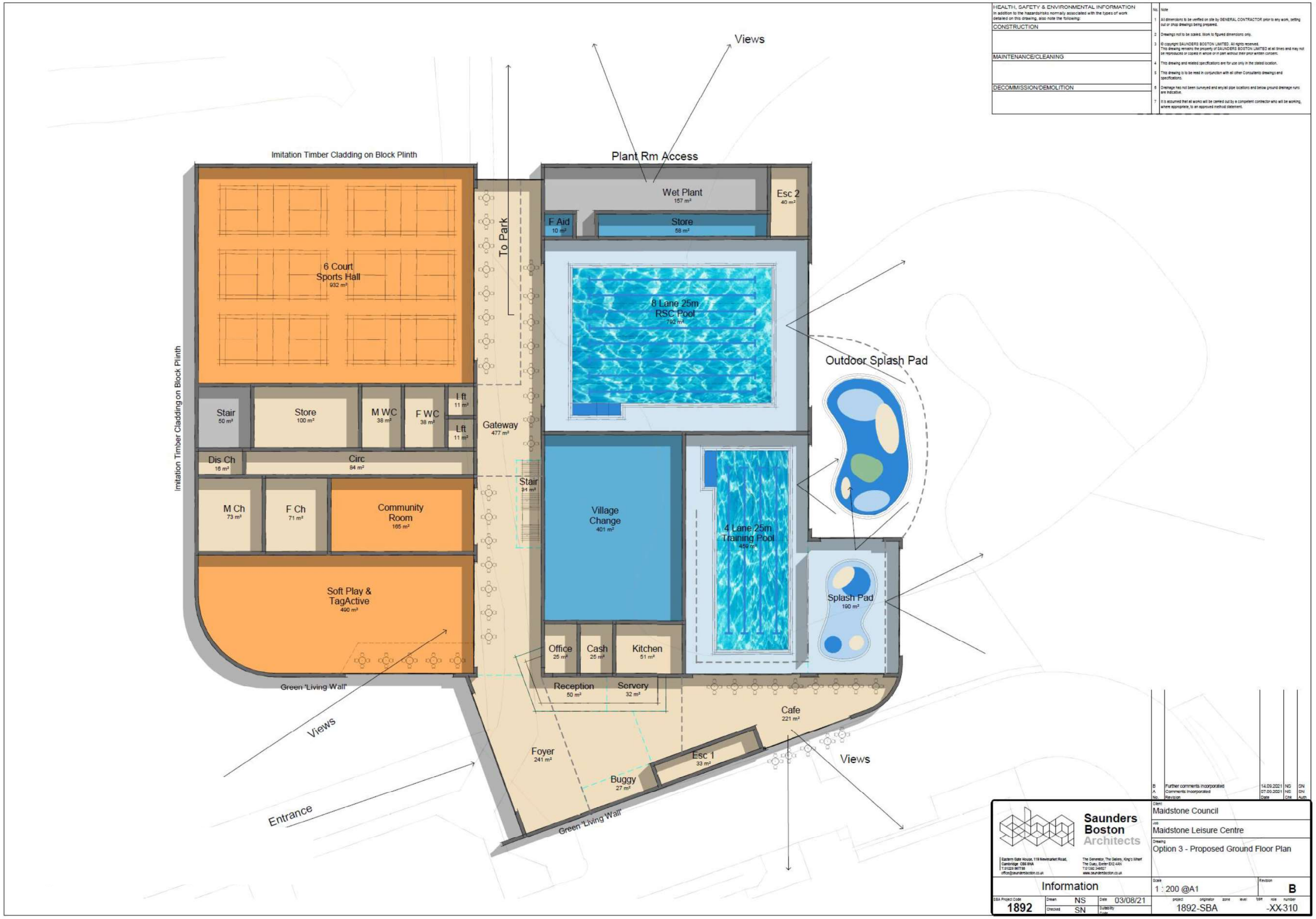
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 3 (Adjacent Site)



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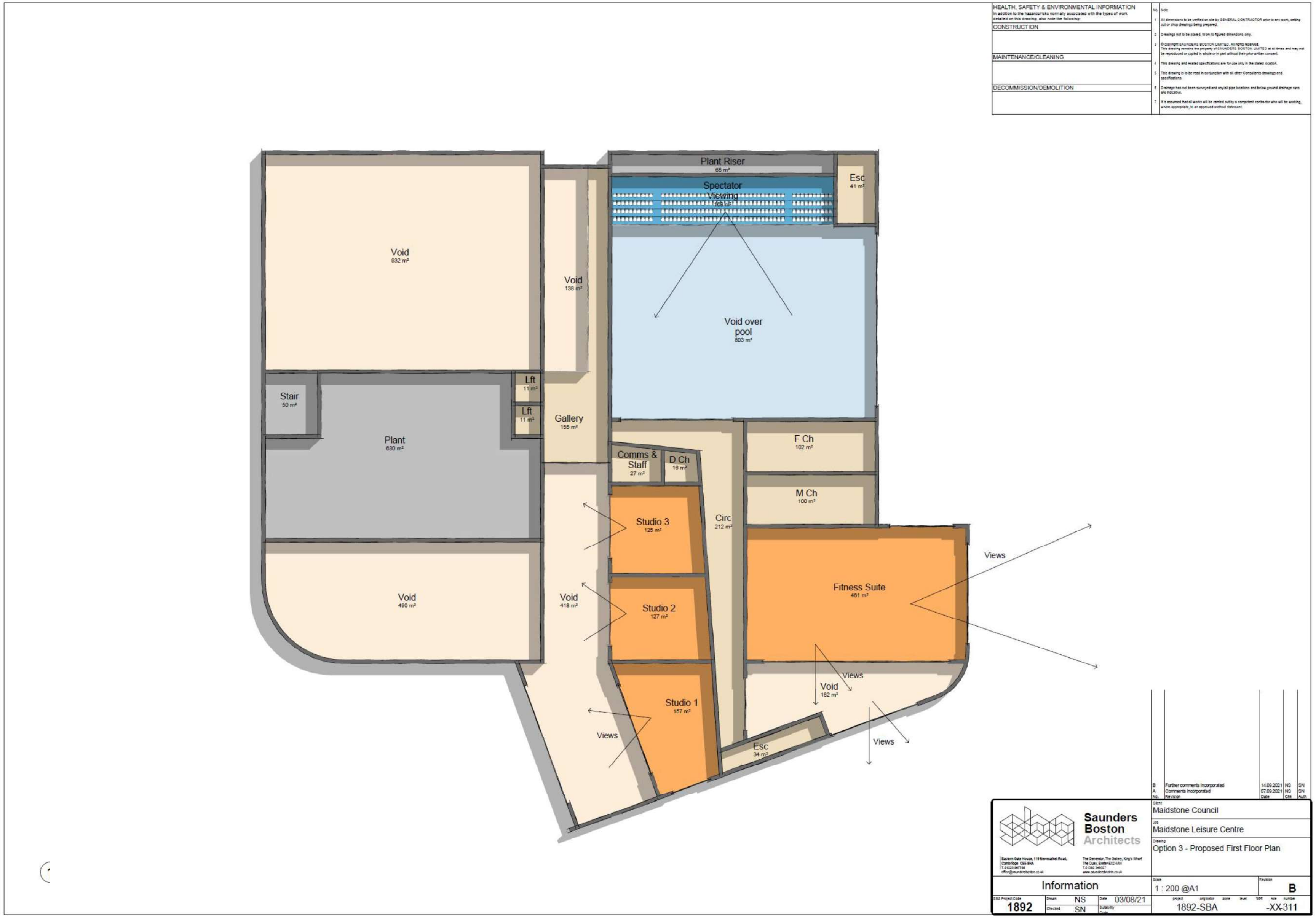
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 3 (Adjacent Site)



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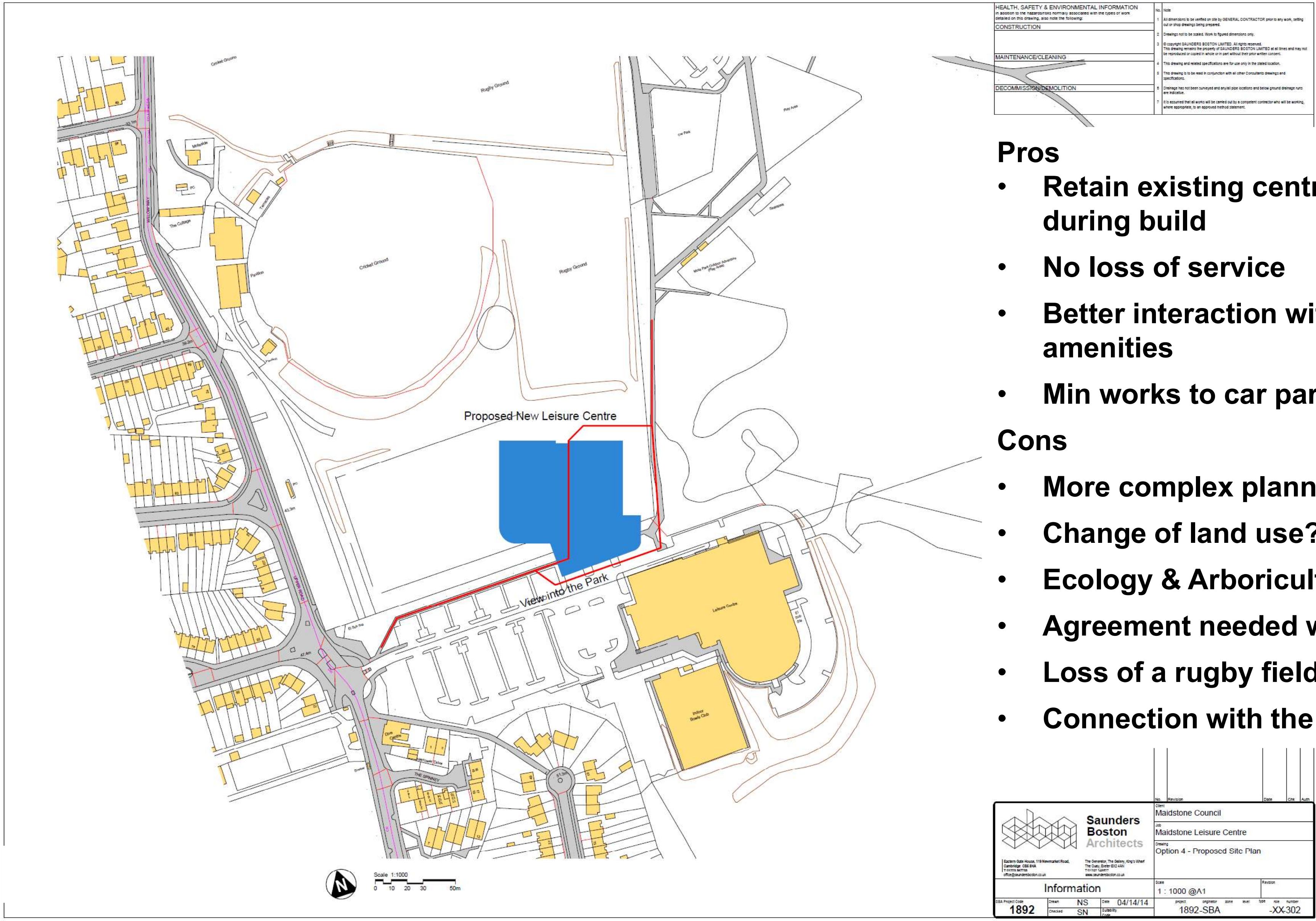
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 4 (Rugby Field)



Pros

- Retain existing centre & car park during build
- No loss of service
- Better interaction with Park / amenities
- Min works to car park

Cons

- More complex planning
- Change of land use?
- Ecology & Arboriculture
- Agreement needed with Rugby
- Loss of a rugby field
- Connection with the park reduced

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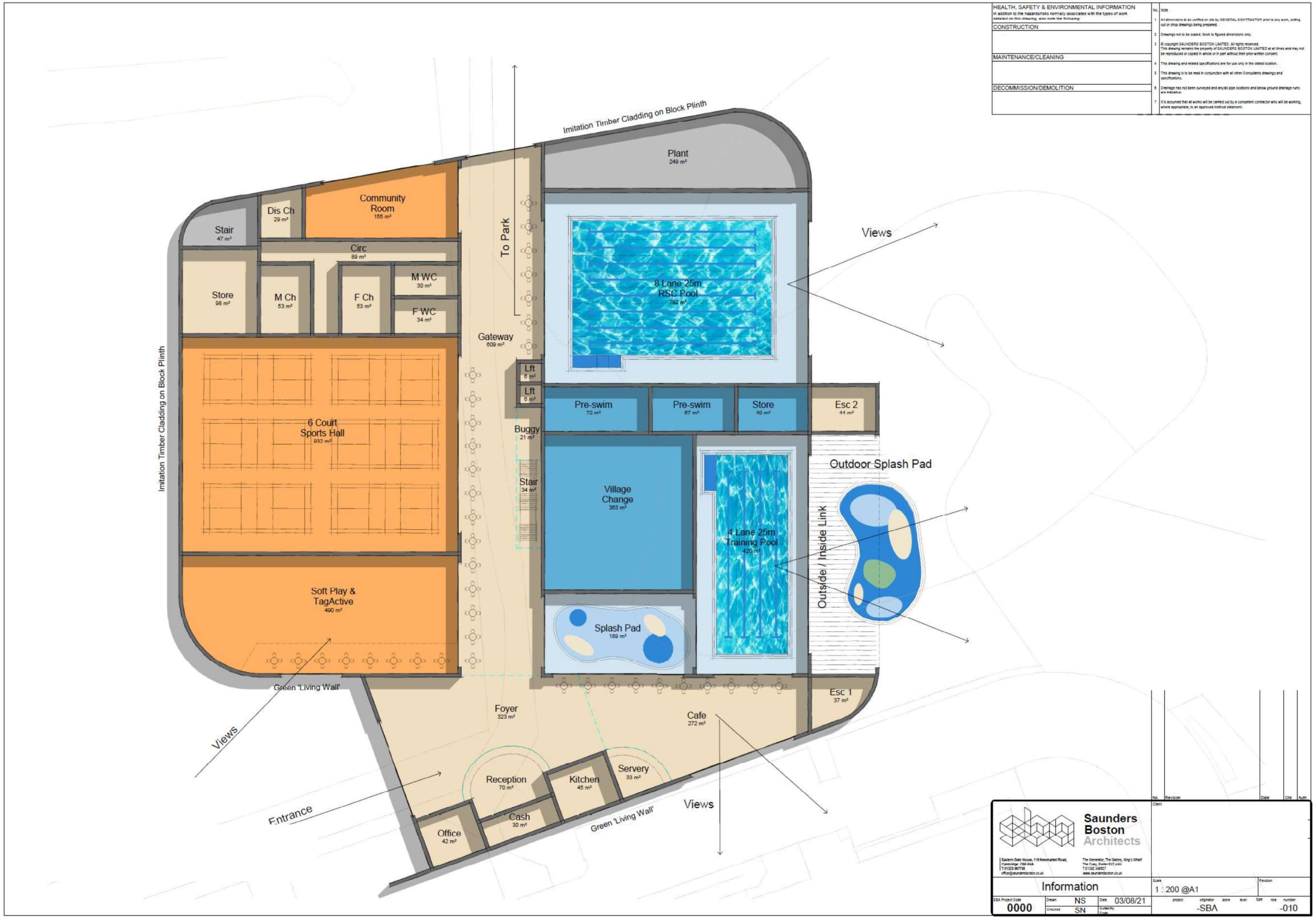
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 3 (Adjacent Site) PREVIOUS DESIGN



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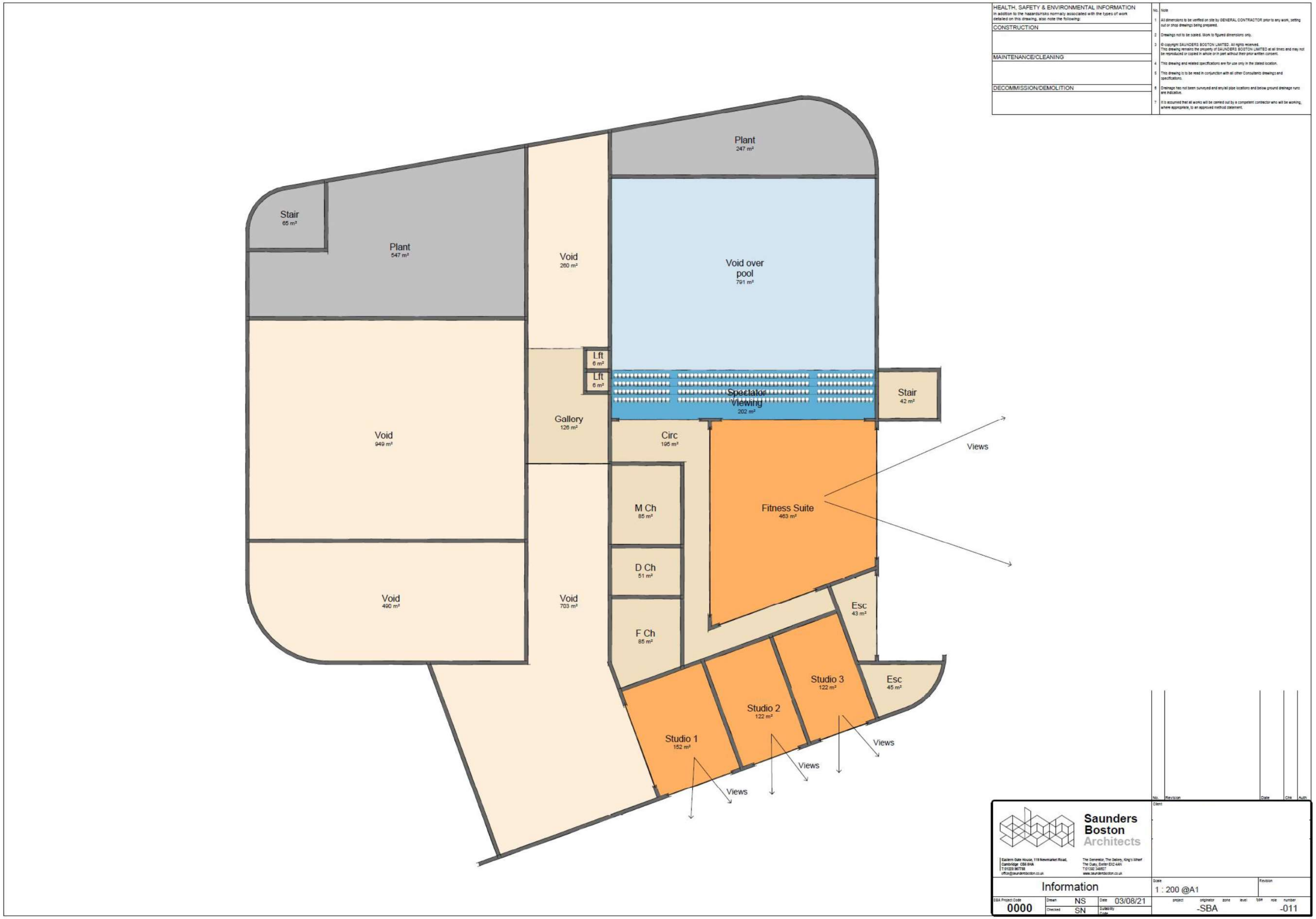
Maidstone Leisure Centre – Option 3 (Adjacent Site) **PREVIOUS DESIGN**

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Soft Play/Tag Active
MAIDSTONE LEISURE CENTRE
220
Entrance/Reception
Cafe


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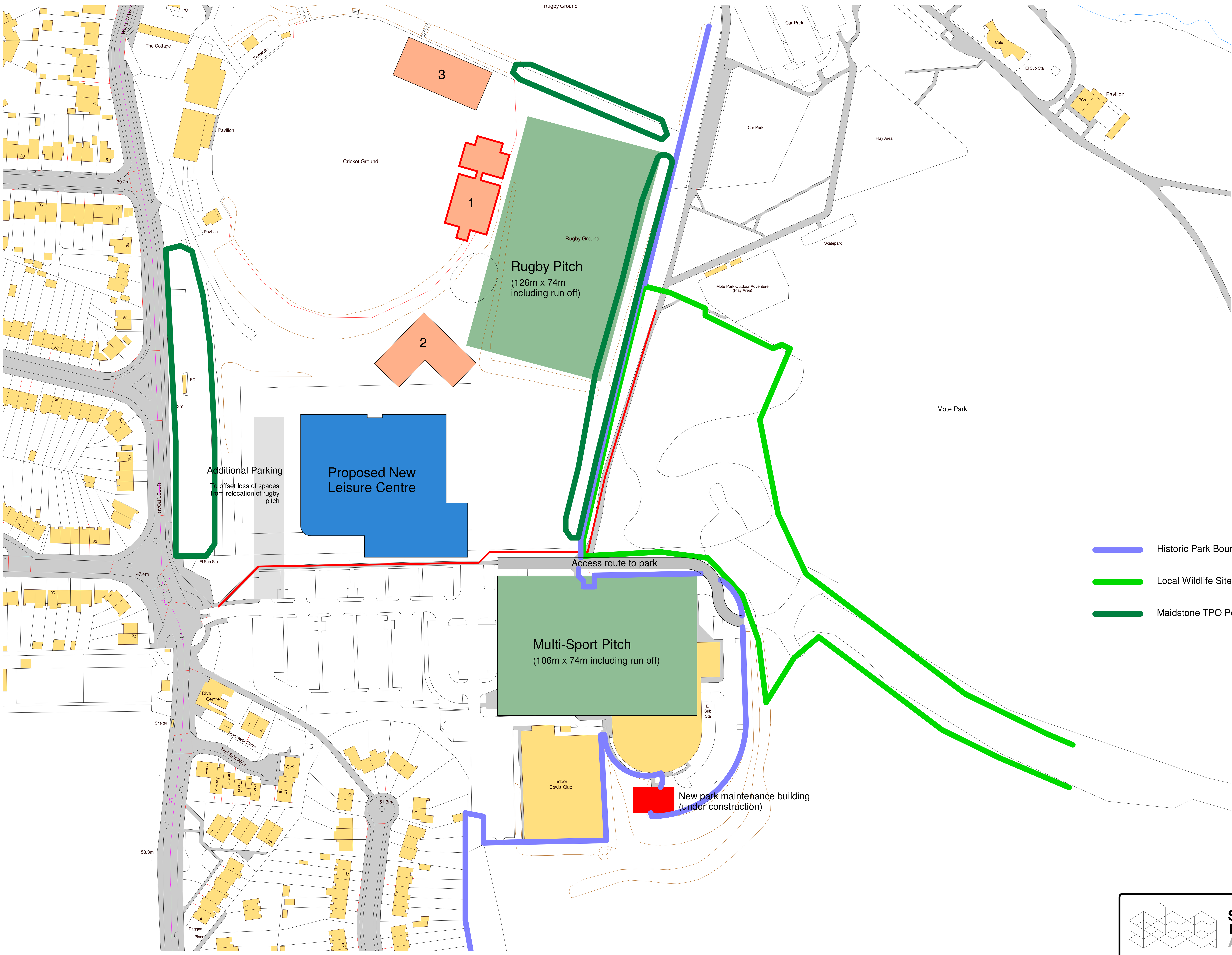
221
Fitness Suite
8 Lane Pool
Cafe
Indoor Splash Pad
Outdoor Splash Pad



Historic Park Boundary

Local Wildlife Site Boundary

Maidstone TPO Poly Boundary

Scale 1:1000
0 10 20 30 50m

No.	Note
1	All dimensions to be verified on site by GENERAL CONTRACTOR prior to any work, setting out or shop drawings being prepared.
2	Drawings not to be scaled. Work to figured dimensions only.
3	© copyright SAUNDERS BOSTON LIMITED. All rights reserved. This drawing remains the property of SAUNDERS BOSTON LIMITED at all times and may not be reproduced or copied in whole or in part without their prior written consent.
4	This drawing and related specifications are for use only in the stated location.
5	This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all other Consultants drawings and specifications.
6	Drainage has not been surveyed and any/all pipe locations and below ground drainage runs are indicative.
7	It is assumed that all works will be carried out by a competent contractor who will be working, where appropriate, to an approved method statement.

No.	Revision	Date	Chk	Auth
C	Additional cricket/rugby pavillion option	11.11.2021	PP	NS
B	Updated site plan	10.11.2021	PP	NS
A	Option 4 Revised	29.09.2021	PP	NS

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Client: Maidstone Council

Job: Maidstone Leisure Centre

Drawing: Option 4 - Proposed Site Plan

Scale: 1 : 1000 @A1

Revision: C

SBA Project Code: 1892

Drawn: Author | Date: 09/28/21

Checked: Checker | Suitability Code:

project	originator	zone	level	type	role	number
1892-	SBA -	ZZ -	XX -	DR -	A -	502

Dover District Leisure Centre

Whitfield, Dover

Status: Completed February 2019
Client: Dover District Council
Operator: Places for People Leisure Management Ltd
Value: £22.64 million

Overview

In July 2015 two major reports were commissioned by Dover District Council to determine the supply and demand for indoor sports facilities and to consider the future of the existing 40-year-old Dover Leisure Centre. They looked at sports halls, indoor swimming pools, health & fitness suites, indoor bowls, tennis courts, squash courts, gymnastics and dance/aerobic studios.

The Council, committed to working with the local community and sports governing bodies to build a new leisure centre in the district fit for the 21st century, worked closely with Sport England to make sure that decisions were based on strong evidence, technical suitability, sustainability, and were financially sound.

It was decided that the new centre would be built on a site in Whitfield. It would include a county-standard competition eight-lane swimming pool with spectator seating for 250 people, a learner pool, four-court sports hall, squash courts, multi-function room, fitness gym, fitness studios, indoor clip 'n' climb facility, a café and two outdoor 3G artificial pitches for five-a-side football.

The project was funded by Dover District Council and Sport England.

Multi-sports Centre

Facility Case Study

A new facility to provide local people with access to sport and leisure facilities to help them lead healthier lifestyles, realise their sporting ambitions, or simply have fun keeping fit!

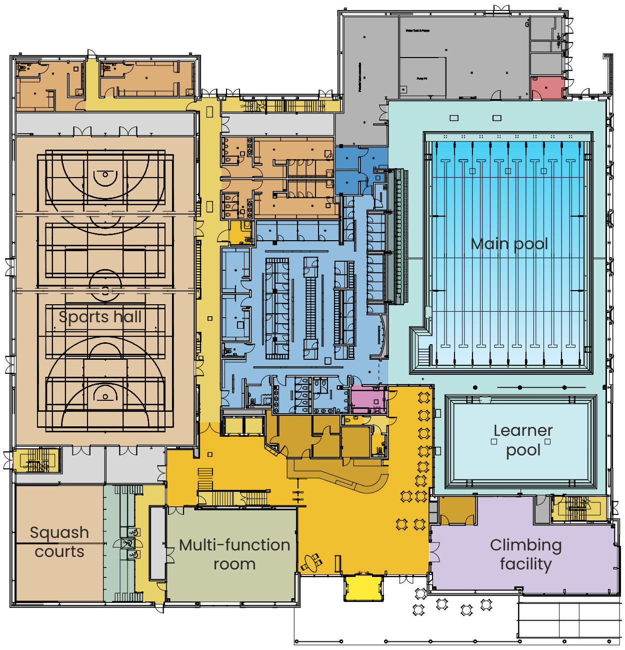

Pool hall

Design

A key aim of the design was to maximise the active frontages of the building facing key viewing points and major access routes. This has created a lively and vibrant facility which is welcoming to the building's users and gives a good idea of what is going on inside.

The building layout has been carefully designed to create clear and simple routes and sightlines between key spaces to make it easy for users to navigate. The use of floor materials and a colour scheme to walls and doors visually define specific areas.

First floor



Ground floor


Sports hall

Extensive consultations were carried out with Sport England, Dover Access Group and Dover District Council's Project Advisory Group to define the project requirements and to develop design proposals to meet a variety of different needs, with accessibility and inclusivity as a core principle.

The building has been designed to be compact, easy to navigate and as welcoming and inclusive

Key

Entrance	Spectator seating	Fitness suite	Climbing facility
Circulation	Pool hall	Studios and spinning	First aid
Foyer/ toilets/ cafe	Wet change	Multi-function room	Stores
Staff areas/reception	Steam/ sauna	Sports hall/ squash	Plant/ service void
Timing office	Changing Places	Dry change	Void

224

as possible for everyone, whatever the level of fitness or ability. The intention has been to create a dynamic and vibrant destination with a facility mix that can be fully programmed for maximum benefit to the local community.

Accessibility has been enhanced with the following features:

- Two vertical access lifts
- Automatic sliding access doors
- Dedicated accessible toilets and changing spaces including 'Changing Places' provision
- Circulation to suit wheelchair users
- Colour-coded signage for easy navigation of the facility
- Adjacent accessible parking
- Pool pods to both pools
- Movable floor to learner pool to maximise flexibility for all users
- Platform lift to squash courts.

Gym

Cycle studio

"We're proud to be investing in leisure facilities alongside Sport England. Their support and funding, along with the work of the Project Advisory Group has been pivotal to the development of plans for a leisure centre that is fit for the future."

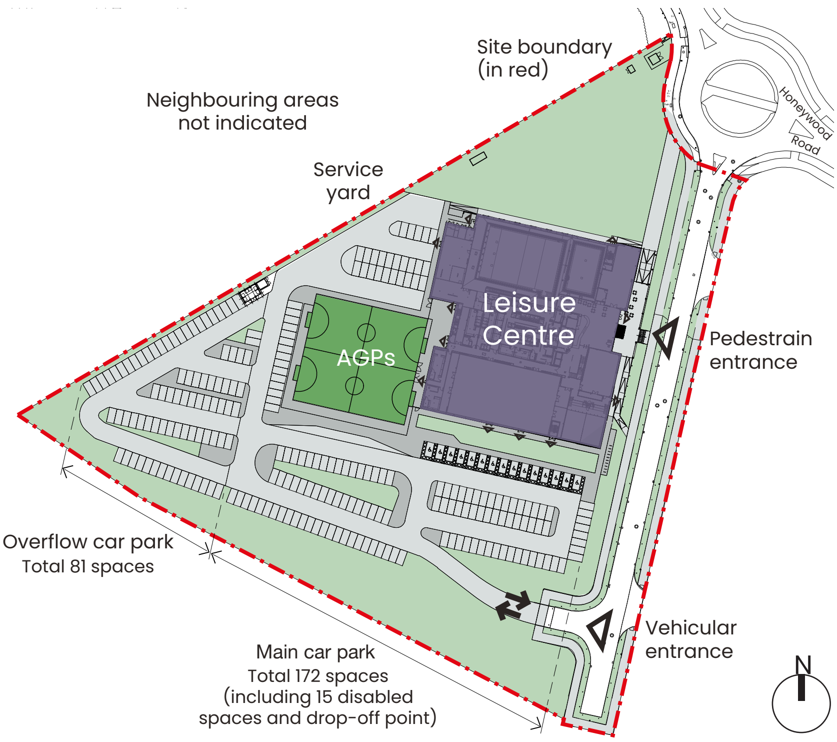
Cllr Trevor Bartlett
Cabinet Member for Property

Schedule of areas

Gross site area	27,705 m^2
Building footprint area	4,373 m^2
Gross internal floor area (GIFA)	5,712 m^2
Circulation area % GIFA	7.8 %

General accommodation / standards

Pool hall	25m 8-lane main pool with spectator seating for 250. Learner pool with movable floor. Sauna and steam rooms
Sports hall	4-court sports hall
Fitness suite	110-station health and fitness suite
Studios	Multi-function room. 2 fitness studios. Separate dedicated cycle studio
Squash courts	2 squash courts and viewing area
Clip 'n' climb	Dedicated indoor climbing facility with briefing room
Changing facilities	Dedicated wet changing village with accessible changing including 'Changing Places' provision. Separate dry changing for sports hall and fitness / studios and outdoor changing
Reception foyer / café	Reception / foyer area with integrated café area and servery with viewing over learner pool and associated multi-function room
Football pitches	2 outdoor five-a-side football 3G artificial pitches



Site plan

Environmental sustainability

- BREEAM 'Very Good'
- Extensive use of natural light and ventilation
- High-efficiency lighting control with occupancy and daylight control
- Heat recovery air handling plant
- High-efficiency condensing gas-fired boilers
- Gas-fired CHP acting as primary boiler generating electricity
- Ultraviolet (UV) disinfection to pools
- BMS + energy monitoring/ targeting
- Roof-mounted photovoltaic panels
- Learner pool movable floor used as pool cover to reduce energy loss
- Mains water leak detection by intelligent metering strategy
- Accurate energy consumption data and modelling of building use to assist in lifecycle costs and benchmarking
- Plant refrigerant leak detection
- Electric car charging points

Procurement / programme

Operator	Places for People Leisure Management Ltd
Contractor	BAM Construction
Project Manager	Hadron Consulting
Designer	GT3 Architects
Tender	Two Stage Design and Build via Southern Construction Framework
Contract	JCT 2016 Design and Build
Duration	16 months


Clip 'n' climb facility

Images provided by QMP and Gary Thomason / GT3 Architects

Key specifications and materials summary

Frame	Structural steel frame
Cladding	Aluminium panel and glazed curtain walling, render finish panels on structural framing system
Roofing	Flat steel deck with 3-ply felt
Internal walls	Blockwork, glazed internal screens
Internal doors	Veneer-faced solid-core doors with stainless steel ironmongery, GRP-encapsulated doors to wet areas
Wall finishes	Painted plaster and ceramic tiling
Floor finishes	Sports hall timber flooring, ceramic-tiled pool hall, carpet and vinyl sheet

Elemental cost summary

	Element	Total cost (£)	Cost (£)/m²
1	Substructure	1,447,000	253
2	Superstructure	3,968,000	695
3	Internal finishes	2,361,000	413
4	Fittings	1,764,000	309
5	Services	4,142,000	725
6	External works	3,331,000	583
7	Preliminaries	1,972,000	345
8	Overheads & profits	440,000	77
9	Contractor's design fees	575,000	101
10	Professional fees	1,946,000	341
11	Contingencies	500,000	87
12	Client direct orders	187,000	33
	Total contract sum	**22,633,000**	**3,962**

Notes:
- Costs are rounded, based at 3Q2017 and exclude VAT
- Costs do not include any land acquisition costs

Specific items of interest

Element	Approx area (m^2)	Water area ratio
Total water area	558	
Pool hall area	985	1 : 1.77
Wet changing, toilets and showers	387	1 : 0.69
Pool equipment store	84	1 : 0.15
Combined area of pool hall, wet changing and storage	**1,456**	**1 : 2.61**
Sports hall	690	
Fitness suite	538	
Studios (incl. multi-function room)	501	

Click here for **User guide** and other **Design and cost guidance**

Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub

Warrington, Cheshire

Status: Completed June 2019
Client: Warrington Borough Council
Operator: LiveWire Warrington
Value: £16.33 million

Overview

The project involved the redevelopment of the existing leisure centre to transform it into a neighbourhood hub for the West Warrington area. The intention was to provide an integrated facility with co-located services that include GP healthcare and other primary care with a wide range of sport and leisure provision. The vision was for a modern and vibrant learning and cultural focus to get people active and living a healthier lifestyle. The new facility is adjacent to Great Sankey Secondary School and provides joint use.

The project was funded via a partnership including LiveWire, Warrington Borough Council, Sport England, NHS England, The Football Foundation and the Lawn Tennis Association.

Multi-sports Centre

Facility Case Study

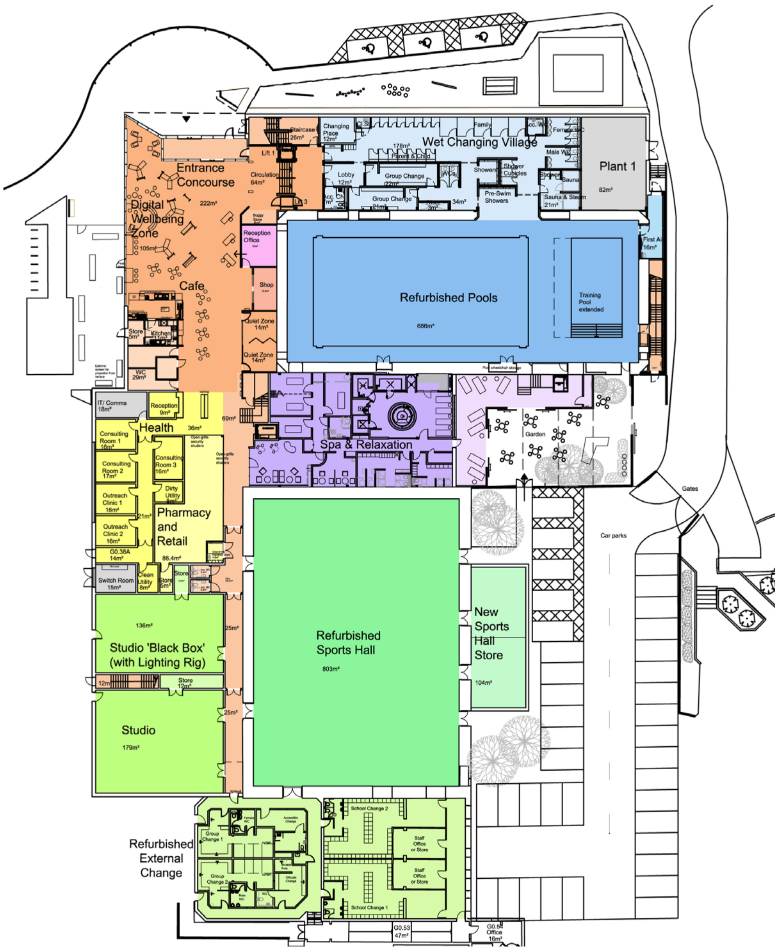
The existing facilities struggled to keep pace with modern demands. Wholesale refurbishment addressed the needs of the general public, customers with specific needs, and more vulnerable sectors such as those experiencing the onset of dementia. The latter had increasingly been recognised as an area requiring special attention. The hub was the first dementia-accredited public building in the UK.

First floor

External Design

The 40 year-old existing leisure centre was primarily a two-storey building with concrete block walls, aluminium windows and timber doors. The building was originally built in 1977 and extended in 1999.

The re-development used a two-storey steel frame that helped to create a contemporary appearance with curtain walling to the entrance concourse and fitness suite clearly defining the entrance. The cladding was with profiled metal sheeting set on a regular grid with vertical features.



Ground floor

"Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub is a fantastic asset for Warrington, a first-class facility designed for everybody in the community. We've achieved our vision to deliver a fully inclusive facility, delivering accessible health and wellbeing services."

Cllr Tony Higgins
Cabinet Board member for Leisure and Community at Warrington Borough Council

Key

- Entrance
- Circulation
- Staff areas / reception
- Pool hall
- Spa
- Wet change
- Pharmacy / retail
- Health and Fitness
- Sports hall
- Dry change
- Sports hall store
- Consultation
- Conference
- Care team
- Plant / coms

228

Reception area

Internal Design

The internal design strategy was to create and promote inclusivity for all users including those with dementia. The building has a simple and clear layout providing ease of access to the different areas. Zones are colour coded with directional signage and wall colours.

The entrance and reception are clearly signposted, with staff either available within this zone or as 'meet and greet' floor walkers.

Large areas of natural light will contribute to improved visibility and orientation throughout. All flooring, walls, skirting and doors are such that light reflectance value (LRV) contrast levels ensure ease of use.

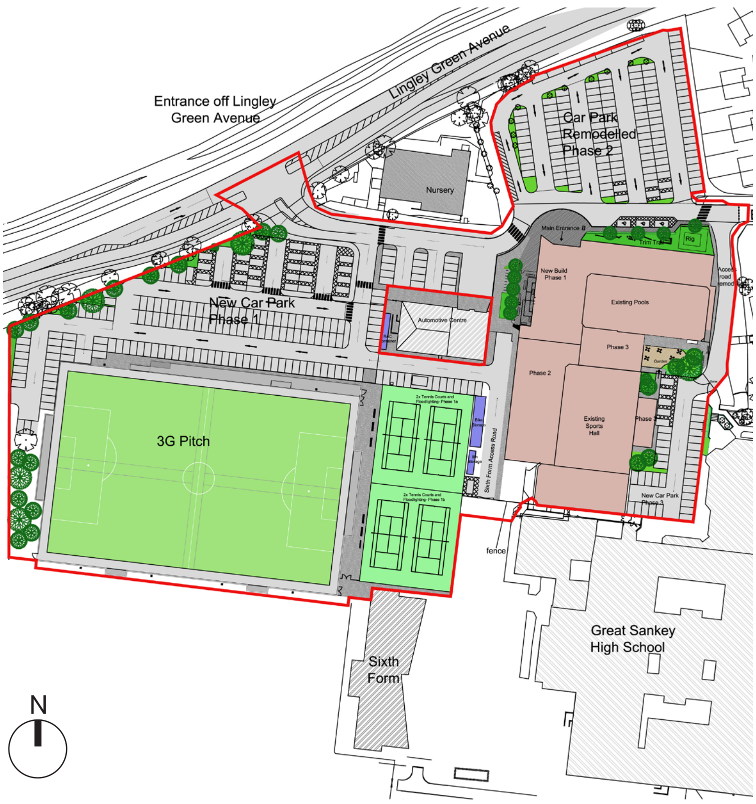
Studio

"This new neighbourhood hub has made a real difference to the lives of people in West Warrington by giving them access to leisure, health and cultural services all under one roof. It has been important to make this LiveWire's first dementia-friendly facility and cater for the growing and older population in the area."

Emma Hutchinson
Managing Director at LiveWire

Schedule of areas	
Gross site area (including pitches)	3.2 hectares
Building footprint area	4,682 m²
Gross internal floor area (GIFA) including new build and refurbishment	6,115 m²
Circulation area % GIFA including foyer and reception	14.0 %

General accommodation / standards	
Pool hall (refurbished)	12.5 x 25 m 5-lane main pool and separate extended 7.5 x 10 m learner pool
Sports hall (refurbished)	6-court sports hall with new adjacent equipment store
Fitness suite	120-station health and fitness suite
Studios	Double-height black box and spin studios
Entrance concourse	Integrated digital wellbeing retail café offer
Clip 'n' climb	Dedicated indoor climbing facility with briefing room
Changing facilities	New wet and dry changing together with refurbished existing change facilities
Care	Health suite including consulting / clinical rooms and retail pharmacy
Business	Conferencing and meeting rooms



Site plan

Environmental sustainability

- Designed to BREEAM standards
- Ventilation heat recovery systems
- Natural ventilation to concourse areas
- Low energy LED lighting

Procurement / programme

Operator	LiveWire Warrington
Contractor	BAM Construction Limited
EA/QS	Wilkinson Cowan
Project Manager	Mpulse Limited
Designer (Concept)	Walker Simpson Architects
Designer (Delivery)	Mersey Design Group
Tender	Procured through the Northwest Construction Hub Framework
Contract	NEC 3 Option A
Duration	Contract programme – 75 weeks

Key specifications and materials

Frame	Structural steel frame
Cladding	Steel cladding, curtain walling and glazing
Roofing	Single ply flat roofing system
Internal walls	Blockwork, stud partitioning
Internal doors	Self-finished doors
Wall finishes	Painted plaster and ceramic tiling
Floor finishes	Non-slip ceramic tiles and vinyl

Pool hall

Elemental cost summary

	Element	Total cost (£)	Cost (£)/m²
1	Substructure	430,000	70
2	Superstructure	4,740,000	775
3	Internal finishes	625,000	102
4	Fittings and furnishings	345,000	56
5	Services including pools	3,405,000	557
6	External works	2,765,000	452
7	Preliminaries	1,300,000	213
8	Contingencies	300,000	49
9	Design fees	1,340,000	219
10	Contractor design fees	585,000	96
11	Client FF&E	495,000	81
	Total contract sum	**16,330,000**	**2,670**

Notes:
- Costs are rounded, based at 4Q2016 and exclude VAT
- Costs do not include any land acquisition costs
- Cost (£) per m² based on 6,115 m² GIFA
- Delays and increased costs above those reported arose from issues encountered with the existing building

Specific items of interest

Element	Approx area (m²)	Water area ratio
Total water area	391	
Pool hall area	679	1 : 1.74
Wet changing, toilets and showers	304	1 : 0.78
Pool equipment store	21	1 : 0.05
Combined area of pool hall, wet changing and storage	**1,004**	**1 : 2.57**
Sports hall	907	
Fitness suite	596	
Spin studio	107	
Studios 1 and 2	316	
Dry change	181	
Entrance concourse	250	
Retail pharmacy	94	
Health consulting/waiting	195	
Other areas including refurbished external change, spa and relaxation, conference rooms, offices, circulation and plant	2,465	

Click here for **User guide** and other **Design and cost guidance**

Illustrations provided by Walker Simpson Architects and Mersey Design Group. Photography provided by Daniel Hopkinson Architectural Photography, LiveWire Warrington and Warrington Borough Council

Case Study: Hart Leisure Centre

Location: Fleet, Hampshire

Client: Hart District Council

Build Cost: £24m including fit out

Construction Completion: 31 March 2017

Main Contractor: Artelia (Project Management)

Architects: GT3 Architects

Build Contractors: Willmott Dixon

Structural & Civil Engineers: Engenuiti

MEP Services: Hampson JPA

Hart District Council's decision to design and build a new large scale leisure was based on:

- the existing centre being towards the end of its useful life; too expensive to maintain and operate
- the existing facility was too small to accommodate the increasing number of participants
- expected population growth over the next 20 years
- lack of car parking at the existing centre, and
- the existing site could not be extended as it was surrounded by land owned by others.

The new build project was funded by a combination of S106 monies, borrowing against future housing growth and SLM's annual Contract management fee payments.

SLM were chosen as preferred operator in July 2015 with the 10 year Contract to operate the facilities across the District starting in January 2016 (15 months before the opening of the new Hart Leisure Centre).

Everyone Active worked closely with the key project partners Hart District Council, Willmott Dixon and architects GT3 through the delivery of regular project updates and steering group meetings.

These meetings were integral in developing a transparent and successful partnership leading to achieving a positive outcome, post construction.

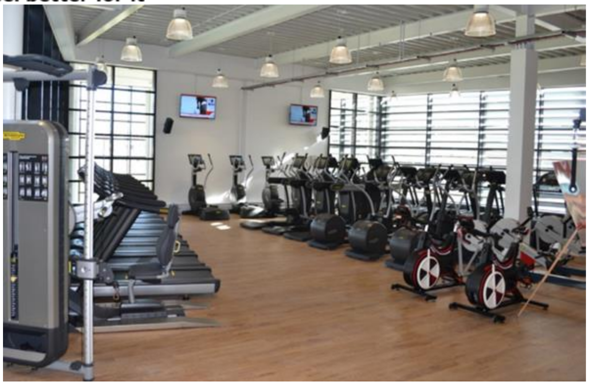
Since its completion the project has been commended as demonstrating best practice and highlighted as an exemplar project by Sport England based on the layout and latest technologies promoted within the centre.

Facilities

- 25m 8 lane competition pool
- 25m 4 lane training pool / movable floor
- teaching pool with water confidence area
- spectator seating for over 200 people
- 130 station fitness suite
- sauna and steam rooms in changing areas
- 8 court sports hall
- climbing wall
- 3x studios
- virtual group cycle studio
- café
- 4x 5-a-side 3G pitches
- 1x full size FA artificial 3G pitch
- 2x junior grass pitches
- crèche
- approx. 350 car park spaces

Key Outcomes
Since the start of the contract Everyone Active has delivered the following performance improvements:

- the old Hart LC averaged approx. 30,000 visits per month. Footfall at the new centre is over 60,000 per month (100% increase)
- 745,845 visits in total in 2017/18 an increase of 204,000 from the previous year
- 17,960 visits from people with disabilities in 207/18 – as a target groups in Hart this highlights the inclusivity of the new leisure centre
- Health and Fitness membership has grown from 2,647 (December 16) to 4,418 (August 18) – 66% increase.
- Swimming lessons have grown from 1,863 to 2,089 since the centre opened (12% increase)
- 288 clients now access the District's GP referral scheme delivered at Hart Leisure Centre
- SLM launched a new recreational gymnastics programme on the centre's open day, which now has over 175 children enrolled; ranging from 4 year olds up until early teens
- SLM launched a new walking football programme in 2017/18 – this has grown from 1 session per week to 3, and now also includes a Women's walking football club. Over 50 people attend per week
- Hart FC are now based at the centre with SLM providing sponsorship for their junior teams
- Hart Swim Swimming Club delivered 2 open galas in the first 15 months of opening - their first in over 15 years. This would not been to be achieved at the old centre, and
- In 2017/18 Hart District Council received over 390 hours a year of free usage to deliver Physical Activity and Sports Development sessions. Delivered in partnership with SLM these include:
    - Time to refresh – afternoon sessions for over 50's
    - Dementia sessions – weekly gym sessions for patients and their carers
    - Inclusive dance sessions – dance classes for all abilities
    - Senior gym & swim sessions, and
    - a range of over 60's activities/group exercise classes.



A video of the Hart Leisure Centre Open Day can be viewed at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4htdaPOtH8.

More than 5,000 people joined double Olympic champion, Rebecca Adlington and Rio gold medallist Alex Danson in opening the new facility.

Contact Reference Details: Client Officer – Paul Weavers
Paul.weavers@Hart.gov.uk

Case Study: Holly Hill Leisure Centre

Location: Fareham, Hampshire

Client: Fareham Borough Council

Build Cost: £9 million

Construction Completion: Sept 2016

Main Contractor: Balfour Beatty

Project Managers, QS and CDMC, and Civil and Structural Engineers, Wessex – M&E

Architects: AFLS&P

Everyone Active (EA) originally started the (10 year) contract in 2005 but following a contract extension, were able to facilitate the delivery of the brand new £9 million Holly Hill Leisure Centre.

Both parties recognised the benefit of being able work in partnership, assisting with the feasibility, layout and design of a new building to exceed Sport England's specifications. This also reduced pre-construction costs.

EA attended all meetings with the Client and Contractor with EA being able to influence design, specification and general fit-out of the centre's fixtures and equipment.

Facilities

- Main Pool - 6 lane, 25m
- Teaching Pool
- 100 station Fitness Suite
- Virtual Group Cycling Studio
- Group Exercise Studios
- Dryside Changing
- Changing Village (wetside)
- Reception foyer
- Free car parking

An opening day was organised for 10th October 2016 with Councillors completed a Civic Opening in the morning and EA holding a launch event in the afternoon.

Both occasions were supported by Olympic Gold Medallist Adam Peaty. A video of the open day can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Mxmy39vo-w.

Mark Bowler - Head of Leisure and Environmental Services at Fareham Borough Council:

"The construction of the new Holly Hill Leisure Centre was the biggest capital project ever undertaken by Fareham Borough Council. When developing the design for the new facility a key factor was to ensure that the design worked for the customer with a good balance and feel to the mix of activity space and customer transition areas.

In this respect the inclusion of representatives from Everyone Active on the design team was considered essential. Their knowledge of similar projects and experience of understanding customer needs helped shape a design that delivered a great visitor experience with commercial opportunity.

This was also evident in the construction phase which ensured that key phases of the build process were completed to a standard and timescale that enabled a smooth transition to opening.

The inclusion of Everyone Active in the project was an essential component in delivering what has now become an iconic Leisure Centre for the Borough of Fareham".

The Authority now boasts two modern, value for money leisure centres which help the community become more active more often. The increase in leisure provision, facilities and services including additional water space will also assist in future proofing the facilities to meet the needs of a growing community.

The growth in attendance across the Borough has helped meet the Council's objective of increasing participation identified in their Community Needs Assessment, Corporate Plan, Commissioning Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Key Outcomes since October 2016:

- Participation/usage 2017/18 — 410,000
- Health and Fitness memberships — 3,172 (August 2018)
- Swimming lessons — 1,324 (August 2018)
- Swimming memberships — 200 (August 2018)
- Quest score — Excellent – achieved within 18 months of opening.