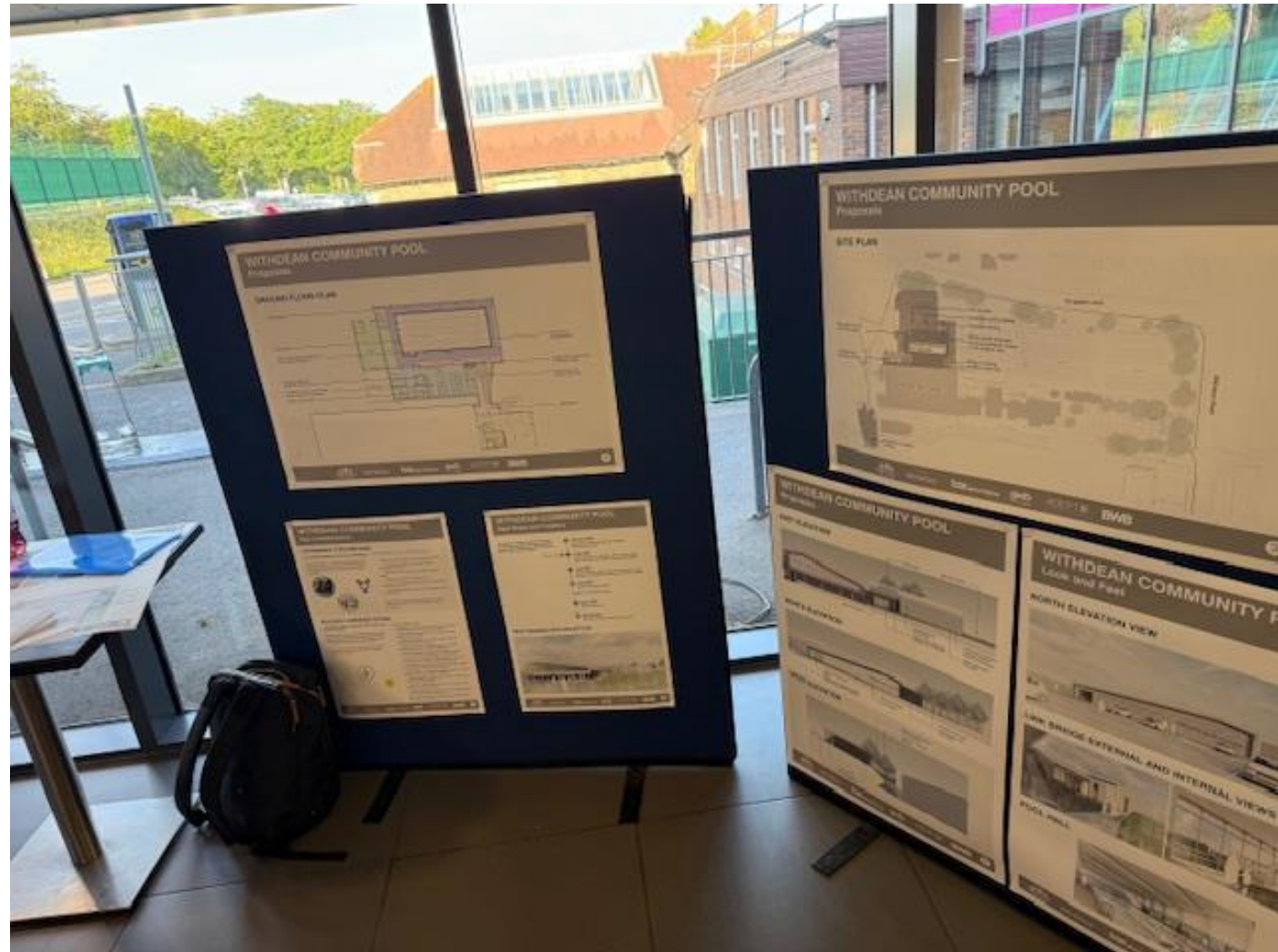


A NEW COMMUNITY POOL FOR THE CITY AT WITHDEAN SPORTS COMPLEX

Stage 3 Engagement
Report – June 2025



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Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to building a new community swimming pool for the city at Withdean Sports Complex and has been working at pace to bring forward proposals for the new facility.

Accessible, inclusive and sustainable facilities remain at the heart of the project that will deliver what residents and stakeholders said they wanted to see, in a new, modern facility created within an affordable budget.

A design team, led by lead development consultants ReCreation were appointed in January 2025 to develop the designs and plans for this proposed new pool.

In recent months, stakeholders and the public have been invited to have their say and share their views on the proposed designs for pool, through a range of methods as described in section 2.0

The recent engagement exercise was aimed to:

- Update key stakeholders on our approach to developing the plans
- Share the emerging designs, key features and show how previous feedback has influenced them
- Understand any key barriers to use – currently not identified in the design/proposals
- Show where the new facility will be located on the site and how the new building could look from the exterior
- Set out a timeline for the project

The Stage 3 engagement for the proposed pool was delivered from April – July 2025 and consisted of:

- One Stakeholder Engagement Workshop
- Multiple conversations with key stakeholders, sports clubs and groups operating at Withdean Sports Complex
- Five in-person public information drop-in events
- Online survey available on the council’s Your Voice Platform - [Your Voice Brighton & Hove](#)

Opportunities to participate were promoted via:

Physical promotion



Leaflets handed out at Westdene Primary School

Posters displayed at Westdene Library and in main reception at Withdean Sports Complex



Websites – press release on council’s website and Your Voice platform updated with survey and engagement information



Social media posts across the council’s platforms and shared by the council’s leisure operator Freedom Leisure

Digital promotion



Emails to political, community and leisure stakeholders, local schools and Freedom Leisure members

Engagement and events summary

2.0

Timetable of events

Event date and time	Event Locations
Weds 23 rd April 6-7:30pm	Sportsman Pub, Withdean Sports Complex
Tues 3 rd June 8:30am-5pm	Westdene Library
Weds 11 th June 10am-12pm	Withdean Sports Complex
Weds 11 th June 4-8pm	Withdean Sports Complex
Thurs 12 th June 8-11am	Withdean Sports Complex
Thurs 12 th June 3-8pm	Withdean Sports Complex

Other feedback channels:

- For those not able to attend any of the drop-in events in person all of the information on display was included in the online survey which was available on the council's Your Voice platform - [Project: Withdean Sports Complex swimming pool | Brighton & Hove City Council](#)
- 888 online surveys** were completed

Content

Material presented at events and online included:

- A site plan showing the location of the new facility on the site
- Key features, proposed floor plan, look and feel of the exterior of the building and landscaping
- Approaches for maximising sustainability
- Design choices to ensure the new pool facility is fully accessible and inclusive
- Next steps and ways to find out more

WITHDEAN COMMUNITY POOL Look and Feel

NORTH ELEVATION VIEW



Sample of exhibition boards

Engagement and events summary

2.0

Feedback gathered

The questions asked were:

How likely would you be to use the community pool at Withdean?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Possibly / don't know
- Very unlikely
- Unlikely

If you were to use the new pool, how would you most likely travel there?

- Car
- Walk
- Bicycle
- Bus
- No answer
- Beryl Bike
- Motorbike/moped
- Other

If you were to use the new pool, which of the following sessions would you or your family participate in?

- Lane Swimming
- Open / family Swim
- Aquafit
- Swimming lessons
- Children's birthday parties
- Swimming Club
- No answer / Other

Looking at the images provided, do you like how the outside of the proposed building looks?

- Yes
- Don't know
- No
- No answer

We also asked participants if they are a current member at Withdean Sports Complex and if they currently swim elsewhere at another pool.

Engagement and events summary

2.0

Feedback gathered

The questions asked were (ctd):

How important are these sustainability and environmental features to you?

1. Using recyclable / sustainable materials
2. Low/Zero carbon technologies like heat pumps or solar panels
3. Systems to conserve water/energy consumption like a pool cover or efficient filtration
4. New planting and wildlife-friendly landscaping
5. Glazing/natural light in the pool hall

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not sure
- Not important
- Not at all important

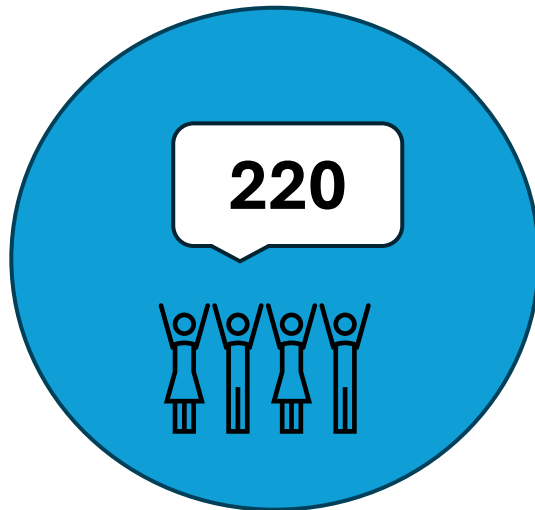
How important are these features to you?

1. Mix of individual and family / accessible changing cubicles
2. Level access to the pool and changing rooms from reception
3. Poolside viewing area including designated wheelchair spaces for equal visibility
4. Buggy park/store
5. Pool Pod and walk-in steps to enable independent entry into the pool
6. Gender neutral toilets
7. Clear signage to help find your way around the facility

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not sure
- Not important
- Not at all important

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the proposed designs and plans you have seen?

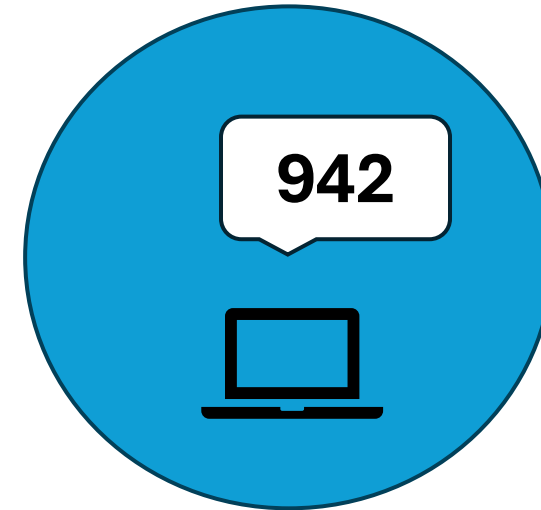
Feedback figures:



Attended our in-person events



Pieces of feedback received across the events and by email



Pieces of feedback were received online

Feedback – Stakeholder Workshop

3.0

Feedback from Stakeholder Engagement Workshop – April 2025

A dedicated workshop was held at the Sportsman Pub at Withdean Sports Complex for key stakeholders who have been involved in the project to date and/or who expressed an interest in providing their feedback on the proposals. The event was attended by 13 people including the project team, leisure operator Freedom Leisure, Swim England, City of Brighton & Hove Swimming Club, Out to Swim, Thomas Pocklington Trust, Brighton Tri Club, Westdene Primary School and representatives from the Council's Communities Team and Healthy Lifestyles Team.

The project team gave a presentation to talk through the plans and designs and took questions from attendees. Overall, the session was very positive. Many participants intended to provide feedback online after the event, but the key pieces of feedback captured from the workshop were as follows:

- Request from the swimming clubs for turning boards and starting blocks
- Positive feedback on the Pool Pod to enable accessibility
- A discussion on programming to ensure it is balanced / provides something for everyone
- Given the pool will have a constant depth of 1.35m, the group were keen on the use of platforms to enable safety for younger children – these platforms should be a contrasting colour to assist anyone with a visual impairment
- Fundraising for equipment
- Request for architects to explore the option of acoustic baffles to minimise noise inside the pool hall and changing rooms
- Consideration should be given to the most appropriate product for lockers – as touch-screen lockers are not usable for people with a visual impairment
- Mentions of lighting, signage, tactile to facilitate neurodivergence
- The location of secure bike racks is important, particularly for triathlon clubs to enable them to host events and to avoid thefts
- Positive feedback on the key principles of design for the changing village
- Consideration to privacy and providing a discreet space for those who want it

Feedback – In-Person Events

3.0

Feedback from in-person events June 2025

Despite many people choosing to provide feedback via the online survey, some feedback was also captured at the in-person events, including the following:

How do people transition if using the gym first and then the pool? Which changing rooms and lockers would they use?

Interest from local physiotherapists who would like to use the pool to provide water therapy/rehabilitation sessions

Some said that the images provided on the online survey were difficult to read/see on a mobile device

Sports clubs and organisations based on the site were positive, so long as parking concerns are explored/addressed for busier times i.e. on football matchdays/when there are athletics events

Request for a clock that is visible in the pool

Local neighbours living directly behind the leisure centre would like more information about the potential overflow car park proposed.

Comments regarding the entrance to the upper/smaller car park being dangerous as there's only really space for one car in and out – could this be looked at as part of this scheme to improve safety?

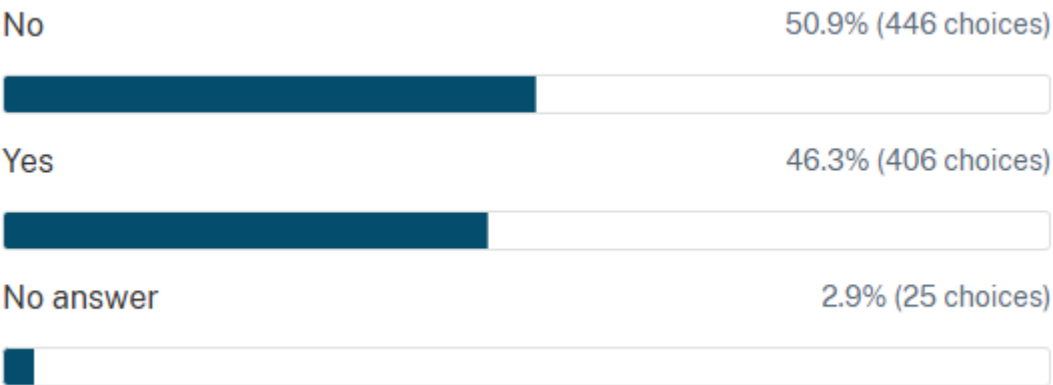
Positive comments regarding the solar panels proposed for the roof, but could there be more accommodated?

Request for a hoist to enable disabled people to transfer from their wheelchair into the wet chair provided

Question 1:

Are you a current member or user of Withdean Sports Complex?

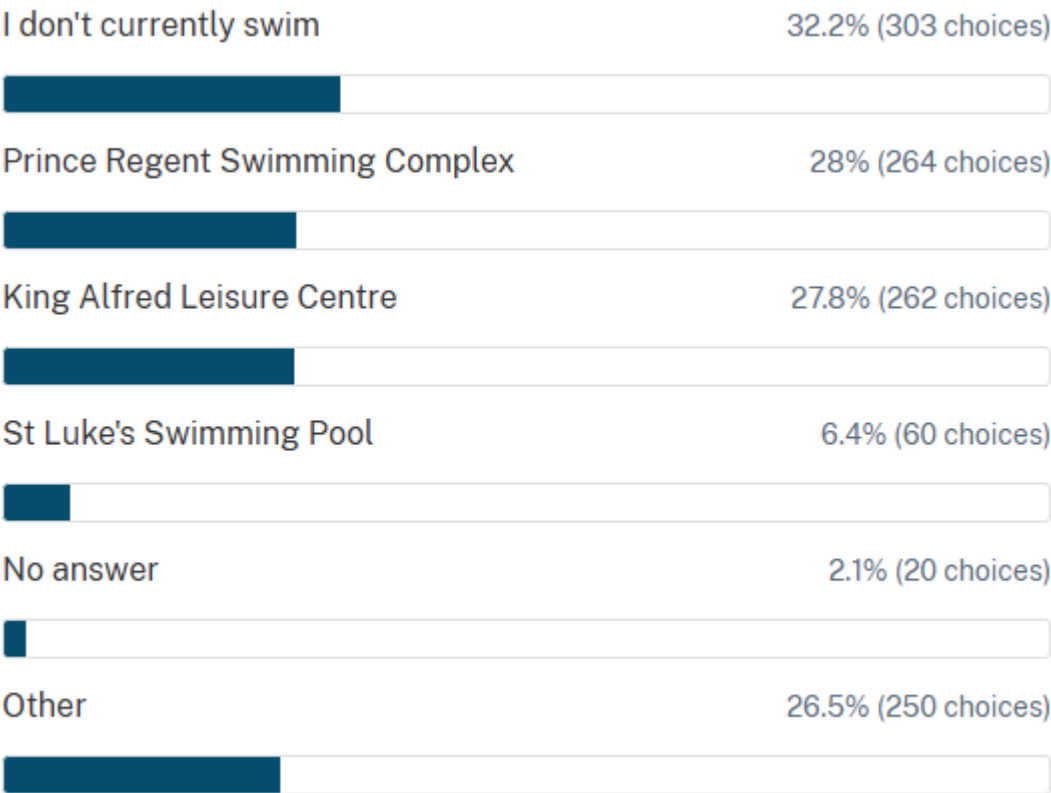
Broadly, half of respondents indicated they weren't already members at Withdean Sports Complex, and half are. This shows there is equal significant interest in using the new pool from people who are already using the site for other facilities or who are likely to be currently swimming elsewhere at another pool.



Question 2:

Which of the following pools do you currently swim at?

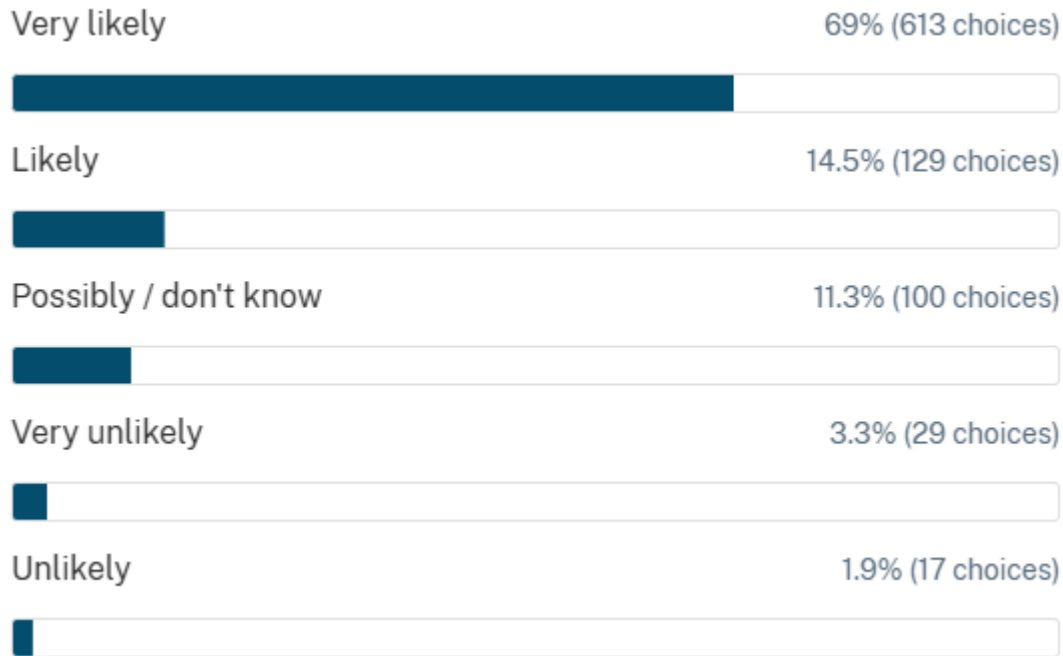
32.4% of respondents indicated that they don't currently swim, meaning this new pool facility could have a positive impact on people that aren't currently participating. Responses also showed that a proportion of respondents are currently swimming at one of the council's other pools whereas others are currently travelling a distance to use alternative pools outside of the city, demonstrating the need for additional provision in the city and supporting this proposed new pool.



Question 3:

How likely would you be able to use the new community pool at Withdean?

An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would be very likely or likely to use the new swimming pool, demonstrating strong support for the proposed new facility.



"I've just got into swimming at 58 and feel so much better for it. I can't wait to have a new facility nearby, but please can it be affordable and open early mornings and evenings"

"Brighton is desperate for a modern, clean, energy efficient swimming facility and so I think this is a great idea"

"I think the new pool would be a wonderful asset to the local community"

"My family of five would use the pool everyday!"

Question 4:

If you were to use the new community pool at Withdean, how would you most likely travel there? (respondents could select more than one option)

The vast majority of people who would be likely to use the new pool have indicated they would either drive or walk to the site, with a smaller proportion likely to cycle and use public transport.

				No Answer			Other
Car	Walk	Bicycle	Bus		Beryl Bike	Motorbike / moped	
57%	42%	21%	13%	10%	2%	1%	1%

"Please can the access via Snakey Lane Twitten (which runs from Preston park station) be improved to provide a better/safer route to encourage more people to walk/cycle to the site"

"Absolutely fine with it taking up car park space, as there are a lot of different means of transport to get to Withdean"

"Please increase the number of disabled parking bays and ensure regular monitoring so they are only used by blue badge holders"

"There needs to be improved public transport links which connect east to west, not just into the city centre"

"Concerned regarding the loss of parking spaces as it already gets very busy. Great to have more facilities but this will bring in more users and the need for more parking"

Question 5:

If you would like to use the new community pool at Withdean, which of the following sessions would you or your family participate in?

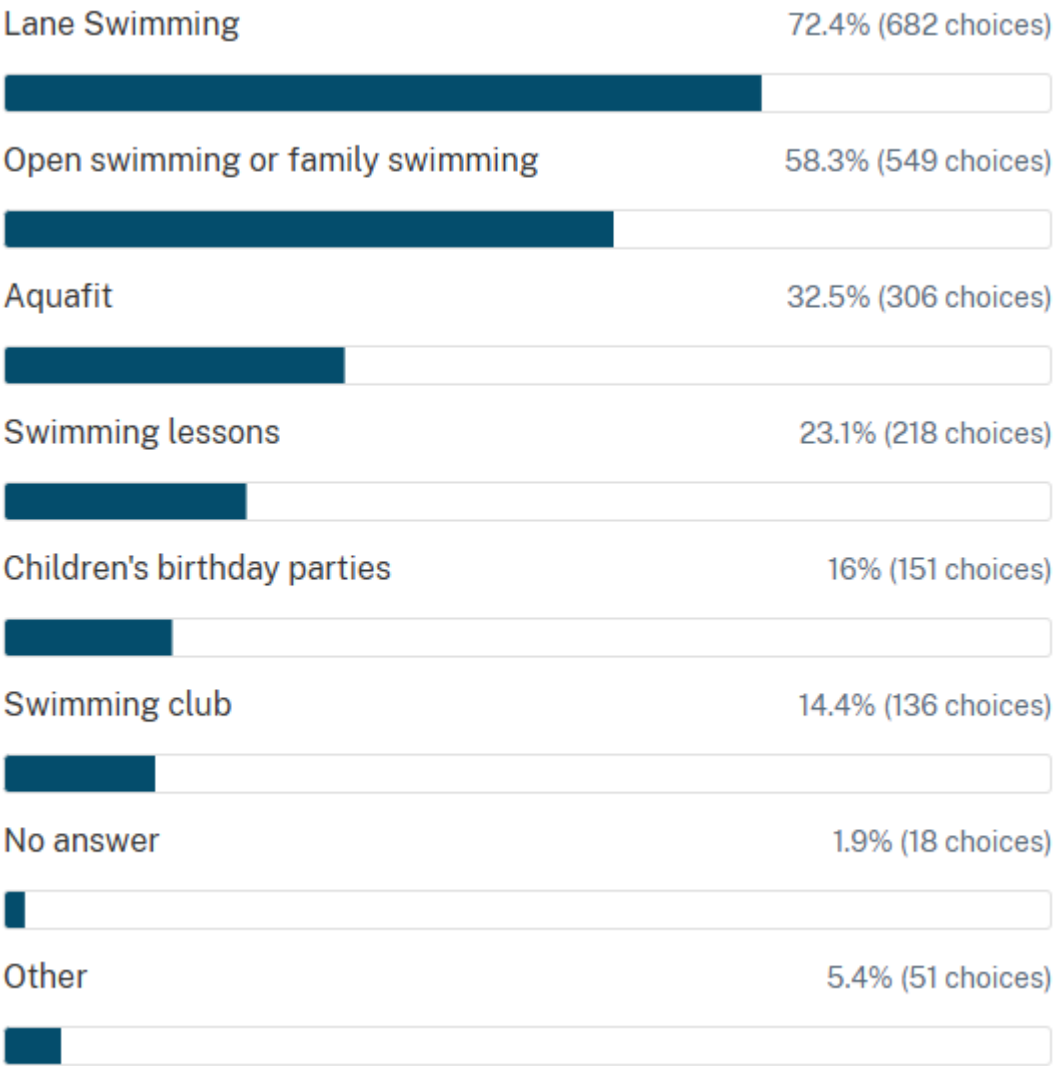
Respondents were able to select more than one option from the list of potential sessions on offer at the new pool – the most popular being lane swimming, family swim sessions and aqua fit/ aqua aerobics. There was also interest in childrens swimming lessons and birthday parties.

In addition, the most frequent request was for women-only sessions and accessible sessions (including rehab/hydrotherapy) for people with disabilities and/or for those who are not confident swimmers.

"Please ensure we have adequate facilities for children's fun and enjoyment.....not just public lane swimming"

"Please can we have diving/starting blocks for local swimming clubs to use"

"I'd like to request women-only sessions for those who want privacy, perhaps for cultural reasons"



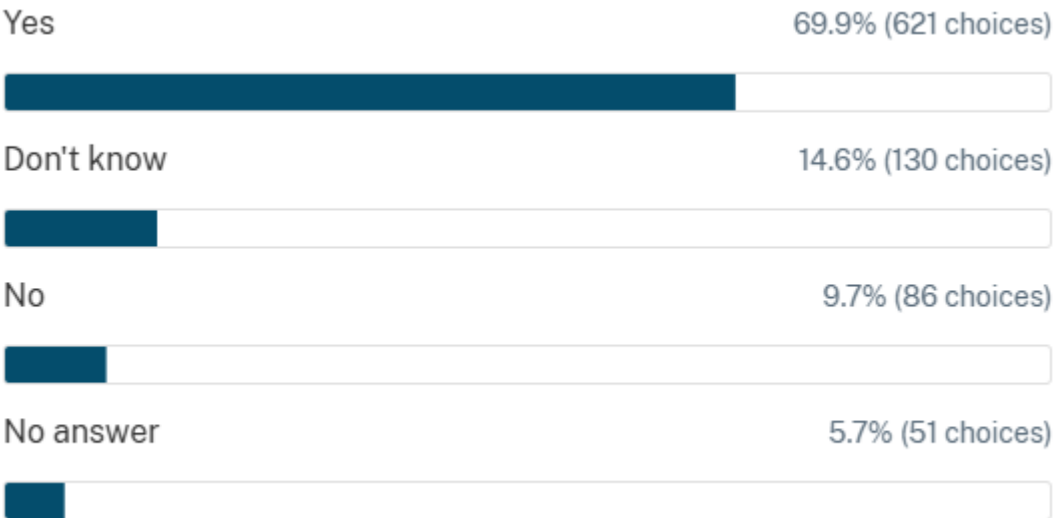
Question 6:

Looking at the images provided, do you like how the outside of the proposed building looks?

When sharing images and visuals of what the proposed new facility will look like from the outside, the majority of respondents (70%) said they like how it looks.

"I feel the pool should match the design of the existing gym – the glazing is eye-catching and interesting"

"The new building should relate to the existing leisure centre in form, materials and colours"



Feedback – Online Survey

3.0

Question 7:

How important are these features to you?

Over half of respondents felt it was very important to have a mix of individual, family and accessible changing cubicles, citing privacy and safety as associated concerns. Over half of respondents also felt it was somewhat or very important to them to have features included which make the new facility fully accessible and inclusive, for example level access, a Pool Pod and walk-in steps to the pool and wheelchair access to the viewing gallery. Having clear signage and wayfinding was also important to respondents, however there was less support for gender-neutral toilets.

"Shower heads at childrens heights would help parents wash children after their swim"

"Natural colours and lighting are important to me as a neurodivergent adult"

"Provision of swimwear drying facilities and hair driers in clean spacious changing rooms with secure lockers please!"

"Making sure it is truly disability accessible is really important for me as a disabled person who lives nearby and loves to swim"

"Please can you include a changing places accessible changing room with an overhead hoist and changing bed"

"The changing facilities must be single sex male or female. If there is a need for gender neutral facilities then they must be clearly signposted as an addition to single-sex facilities"

	Not at all important	Not important	Not sure	Somewhat important	Very important
Mix of individual and family/accessible changing cubicles	9.31%	7.24%	4.83%	25.63%	52.99%
Level access to the pool and changing rooms from reception	14.39%	19.88%	10.41%	29.01%	26.32%
Poolside viewing area including designated wheelchair spaces for equal visibility	14.54%	18.79%	11.82%	31.44%	23.4%
Buggy park/store	25.09%	20.73%	13.21%	24.61%	16.36%
Pool pod and walk-in steps to enable independent entry into the pool	13.35%	15.26%	12.04%	27.29%	32.06%
Gender neutral toilets	45.43%	14.95%	14.71%	12.93%	11.98%
Clear signage to help find your way around the facility	6.92%	6.92%	9.85%	28.25%	48.07%

Feedback – Online Survey

3.0

Question 8:

How important are these sustainability and environmental features to you?

When presented with several sustainable and environmental features included in the design, respondents indicated all of them were somewhat or very important to them – with glazing/natural light in the pool hall being the most important, along with new planting and landscaping around the site.

"I would like more information to understand about the trees and planting, and any impact on local wildlife"

"I am pleased you have included solar panels in the roof design but have you explored the option of a bio-solar roof design (green roof alongside solar panels) "

"Is it possible to have more natural light from windows in the pool hall?"

"It is important to make sure the pool is energy efficient and is able to be heated to a comfortable temperature"

	1 - Not at all important	2 - Not important	3 - Not sure	4 - Somewhat important	5 - Very important
Using recyclable/sustainable materials	7.11%	5.63%	6.05%	35.46%	45.75%
Low/Zero Carbon technologies like heat pumps or solar panels	7.54%	3.61%	5.84%	31.32%	51.7%
Systems to conserve water/energy consumption like a pool cover or efficient filtration	5.63%	2.97%	4.99%	30.79%	55.63%
New planting and wildlife-friendly landscaping	5.2%	3.82%	6.69%	27.18%	57.11%
Glazing/Natural light in pool hall	4.35%	2.97%	4.88%	26.54%	61.25%

Question 9:

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the proposed designs and plans you have seen?

The most frequently raised issues by respondents were along the following themes:

- The need for single-sex/male and female spaces (i.e. toilets and changing) - citing privacy, dignity and safeguarding concerns
- Concerns over parking provision at peak times – with the suggestion of improved public transport and cycling routes or parking controls as mitigation
- A lack of children and family-friendly activities, for example splash areas, shallow ends and fun features
- Accessibility for disabled users was highlighted with a request for hoists and appropriate equipment
- Support for the inclusion of steam rooms and saunas due to the health popularity and health benefits
- Some respondents raised concerns over affordability, wanting reasonable prices to ensure access for all
- A call for SEN-friendly sessions and time for swimming club use

Demographic data

A set of equalities questions were included at the end of the online survey as optional, with 58% of respondents choosing to answer them. Some of the key response rates are listed below:

Age – strongest representation was from 35-54, with older people (aged 75+) and young people (aged 16-24) underrepresented

Disability/Health - only 13% of respondents have a disability/condition which limits their day-to-day activities, with the most having a physical disability and less having a long-standing illness, mental health condition, learning disability or autism

Gender/Sex Identity – Over ¾ of respondents were female, with 23% being male and others preferring not to say or indicating non-binary best describes their gender

Ethnicity – the majority of respondents (87%) selected White as their ethnic origin, with less than 1% selecting a number of other ethnicities including Black, Asian and Mixed

Sexual Orientation – the majority of respondents (73%) indicated they are heterosexual, with 6% selecting bi-sexual, 4% selecting lesbian/gay woman and 2% selecting gay man

The events were well attended and the volume of online feedback shows that the project is important to the residents of Brighton & Hove and there is strong support for the proposed new swimming pool.

The 5 key pieces of feedback captured during this recent engagement are as follows:

1. Concerns over [parking provision](#) at peak times from existing members, clubs hiring facilities on-site and local neighbours
2. Although there is acknowledgement that good effort is being made to cater for those with disabilities, further consideration should be given and issues addressed to ensure the new pool facility is [fully accessible](#), including more spaces for Blue Badge holders closer to the facility and the necessary lifting equipment (e.g. hoist) for those who need it
3. People are keen to see the new pool [built as quickly as possible](#), with regular updates and transparency around the timeline
4. Concerns about [safeguarding and privacy](#) were raised in relation to toilet and changing room provision, with some respondents preferring separate single-sex areas as opposed to one changing village with individual cubicles
5. More [secure cycle parking](#) and [improvements to public transport and pedestrian routes](#) were a popular request and could help dissuade more people driving to the facility if provided