

Exeter City Swimming Club Chairman  
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11 January, 2016

Dear Cllr Edwards,

RE: Exeter City Swimming Club's Opposition to Exeter City Council's Planning Application for a New Pool at the Bus Station

Firstly, I would like to say that we are very pleased that the council wishes to address and improve health and sporting participation in Exeter. We would love to see a new participation and competition pool built in principle and practice; however, we have objections on your proposed pool's location, design shortcomings and financial viability.

Therefore, we would propose a less expensive, yet more practical and useful pool and sports facility in a more viable and sustainable location, that would not be a burden to the city ratepayers as the proposed pool will inevitably be.

The main reasons the swimming club opposes the new pool proposal and planning application are detailed herein.

### **Congestion**

We know, despite your claims that people will take the bus, walk, or cycle to the swimming pool, that the vast majority of people will use a car to get to the pool due to necessity or preference. This includes the need for disabled swimmers to park adjacent to the pool for accessibility reasons. Indisputably, all this will increase the congestion within the city centre and be further worsened, especially in the area of St James, as traffic is to be diverted through this area of Exeter due to the closure of Paris Street to vehicles. The argument for siting the pool where you propose due to the fact that 26% of Exeter's population does not have access to a car (referenced on Exeter Active's FAQs) doesn't stand up, as the other 74% (unequivocally, the vast majority), therefore do have cars and *will* opt to drive. There is also already a swimming pool close to the city centre and on bus routes at the Riverside Leisure Centre, Exe Bridges. We believe that Exeter should develop a comprehensive transport policy to ensure an integrated approach to transport around the city; this should be done in parallel with any proposal for a city centre leisure facility, or even be part of the planning proposal.

### **Pool Is Not Fit For Purpose**

It can't be used for competitions, including the well supported Exeter primary schools' gala, due to the total omission of parking for coaches and the chronic lack of spectator seating. The pool will also not be able to be used by our club for training due to rush-hour traffic congestion pre- and post-school, which will certainly deny the council income from pool hire. The swimming club will be forced to host all galas at Plymouth, Millfield, Bristol and Cardiff, thus taking vast sums of income for the pool and surrounding businesses, especially restaurants, cafe and hotels, to other cities. This is most disappointing and makes no business sense, whatsoever. There is also the issue that many sports clubs in Exeter are struggling to find adequate space to train, practice or compete. The proposed facility does not cater for any of these other sports. Exeter's sports clubs are too reliant on having to use private establishments such as David Lloyd Exeter, Devon and Cornwall Police HQ and Exeter University. To continue to do this is not sustainable as a long term solution, because it will result in clubs' revenues not being invested back into young talent's development and instead spent on hiring expensive facilities.

### **No Sporting Strategy Document (SSD)**

This document is essential for councils to have in place to allow sports clubs of their respective regions to identify to Sport England what they require and subsequently be able to apply for funding, advice and support to help ensure that everyone has access to high-quality facilities. We are aware that many clubs have not been able to grow or develop due to this document not being implemented by Exeter City Council. We know this has not been done, as Cllr Rosie Denham conveyed to us at

our meeting that it was only now in the process of being completed. In our opinion, this is far too late and the SSD should already be in place to urgently understand the needs of sports clubs in our city.

**Too expensive**

We don't believe that the pool will make an operating profit. This is because the council has not taken into account the capital cost (depreciation) that should be applied to the facility, probably for a 25-year Return on Investment (ROI) period. With the initial cost being a minimum of £26 million, even ignoring interest, this would equate to over £1 million per annum to add to the annual cost of the proposed new pool. We suspect that this will wipe out any operating profit. Please can you supply your financial projections for the 25-year period from theoretical build completion, including depreciation of the capital cost and ROI?

A top-class pool, health, well-being and fitness centre catering for many other sporting activities could and should be built elsewhere in the Exeter area (for example adjacent to Exeter Arena, as the council owns the land) for half the cost and generate a genuine profit and ROI.

**Competition for Gym Membership**

We know that another new gym has opened in Southernhay (Anytime Fitness). This is in addition to well established gyms in the city including *Fitness First*, *David Lloyd Exeter* and the four-gym-strong Legacy Leisure portfolio. As part of your financial projections, please can you provide the competitor analysis and latent demand reports for a new fitness gym that you should have commissioned as part of the financial/ business planning process? Please can you also detail whether or not these incorporate the proposed gym and any further forecast growth in competition?

To sum up, we believe that it isn't too late to take on board our objections and alternatives, as well as those from many other people in and around Exeter. We feel strongly that Exeter has the potential to be a leading sporting light, not only in the County of Devon, but regionally, nationally and internationally, too. As the local, friendly, thriving and charitable swimming club, we urge you to reconsider your plans and develop a facility that is truly suitable for all to use, future-proof in terms of size and potential for expansion and will pave the way for a more prosperous and active Exeter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter – we appreciate that you are a very busy person.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean Drury", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dean Drury  
Chairman  
Exeter City Swimming Club

