

Quarry Swimming and Fitness Forum Response to Shropshire Council Consultation Documents

on

The Future of Swimming and Fitness Provision for Shrewsbury

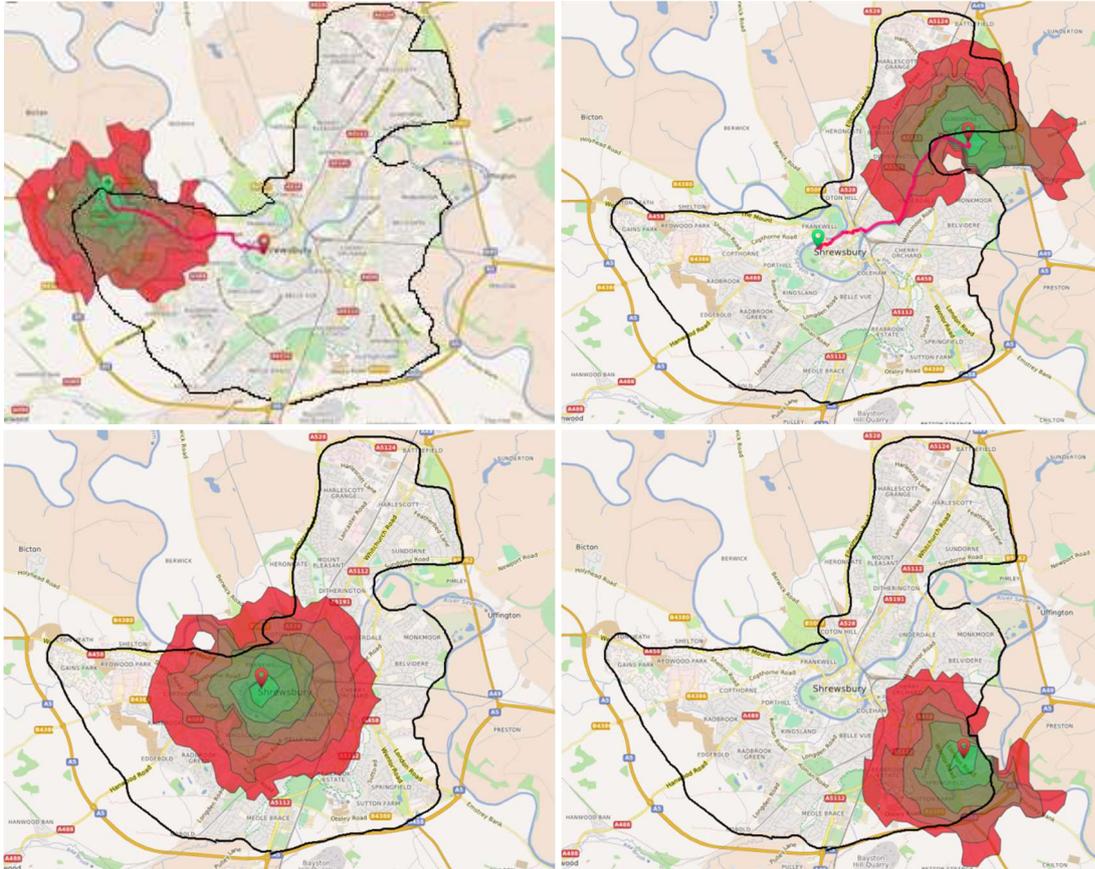
October 2015



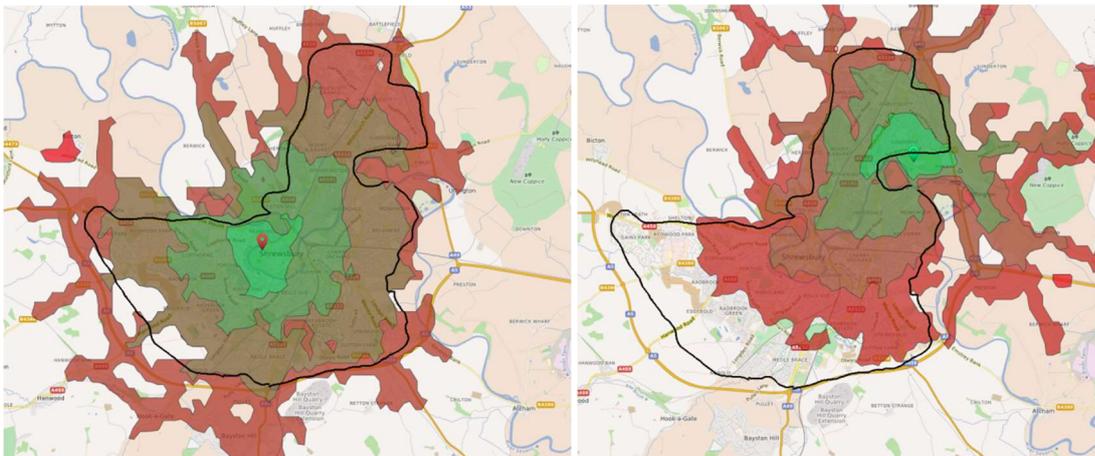
Photo: Shropshire Star 2013

Travel Time Maps

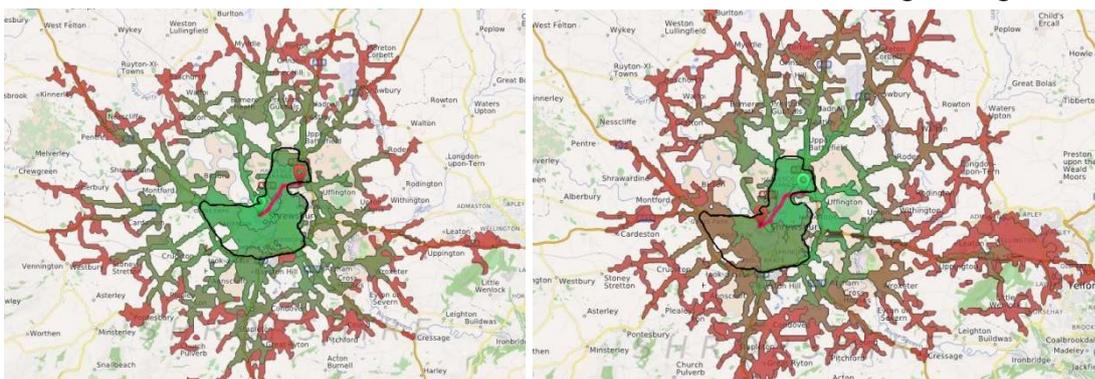
WALKING times to three edge-of-town locations (Clayton Way, Sundorne, London Road) & the central Quarry Park - 5 minute intervals up to a maximum of 30 minutes (see Links ⁰).



CYCLING time comparison between the Quarry & Sundorne - 20 minute maximum.



DRIVING times comparing the Quarry & Sundorne, estimated 20 minute drive in traffic. This increases travel times for those in the west, south, & centre of town, adding to congestion.



⁰ Isochrone maps from Geoinformatics Research Group, University of Heidelberg

Executive Summary

This is the Quarry Swimming and Fitness Forum's response to Shropshire Council's 2015 consultation on the future provision of swimming and fitness facilities in Shrewsbury.

QSFF's interest is to ensure that Shrewsbury has a swimming facility to be proud of, which should:

- increase the active participation of residents of the town and surrounding area to improve community health and individual well-being
- serve the schools, sixth-form college, & university student population, specialist clubs, and those with special needs
- contribute to the town's economy through users combining trips for exercise with shopping and social purposes, bringing trade and vitality to the town
- be a landmark facility that enhances the attractiveness of the town as a tourist destination

To meet these aims, we believe:

- A central site conveniently serves a much larger proportion of the population than a peripheral one and encourages regular use, as well as providing sustainable travel options for young and old.
- The primary aim of a new facility is to *"increase participation levels to impact positively on community health and well-being."* The current total activity of the Quarry and SSV is considerably greater than the predicted usage of a combined SSV facility. The planning model itself indicates that fewer people will access an edge of town location than a central location.
- Eleven thousand new houses are planned to the south and west of Shrewsbury so shifting swimming provision to the north-east will disadvantage them, and most of the existing customer base in the centre, south, and west of the town.
- The new University Centre will need swimming and fitness facilities for up to 2,000 students and could combine with other functions such as the Students Union, and community activities.
- The proposed two pool solution is predicted by the Facilities Planning Model to have insufficient capacity immediately on completion c.2020, even with reduced participation, let alone be able to meet rising demand over the next forty years.
- Shropshire Council's own planning policies include encouraging more sustainable modes of transport, and reducing the needs of people and businesses to travel by car. A peripheral location would disregard town, county, and national policies on accessibility and sustainability.

It is clear that a town centre location is better for the residents of Shrewsbury, and that an open, public and thorough appraisal of potential refurbishment, renovation, or new build sites within the town centre is needed. Disregarding the evidence of a strong preference for a town centre location is likely to result in a significant reduction in use of the future facility should it be relocated to the edge of town.

The direct travel costs to users will increase for an out-of-town facility. Increased mileage will lead to increased congestion on already clogged roads. Walking options will be reduced for most. Cycling will become much harder for most. Limited timetables & double bus fares will put off the frail or elderly, as well as children, and others without their own car.

The Options Report does not provide the Council with a sound basis on which to make a decision on the provision of public swimming and fitness facilities in Shrewsbury. The design brief should be reviewed to ensure that it is based on accurate projections of demand over a 40 - 50 year lifespan.

A town centre facility, if designed with sufficient capacity, has the potential to support residents and businesses and contribute to the health and vitality of our town for many years to come. This is supported by many local organisations; by national & local policies; by the evidence presented in the Options Report; and by the vast majority of the people of Shrewsbury.

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Abbreviations

BID	Shrewsbury’s Business Improvement District
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
LA	Local Authority
LD	Liberal Democrat (Shrewsbury Branch)
LDF	Local Development Framework
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.
NOMIS	Official Labour Market Statistics, ONS
NPPF	National Policy Planning Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
QSFC	Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre
QSFF	Quarry Swimming and Fitness Forum
SABC	Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council
SAMDev	Site Allocations and Management of Development
SC	Shropshire Council
SE	Sport England
SL	Strategic Leisure
SSV	Sundornedylan Sports Village
SUE	Sustainable Urban Extension

Sources of information

The following main sources of information have been used in the preparation of this document:

- Options for the Provision of Public Swimming (and Fitness) Facilities in Shrewsbury. Final Report. Strategic Leisure. June 2015
- Local Assessment of Swimming Pool Provision in Shrewsbury. Facilities Planning Model Final Version Sport England. June 2015
- Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre Users Survey Shrewsbury and Atcham Liberal Democrats. July 2014
- Shrewsbury Swimming Facility Needs Assessment. Torkildsen Barclay, May 2007

Links

Quarry Swimming and Fitness Forum <http://www.quarrypool.co.uk>

Shropshire Council’s survey & consultation pages <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RMKFY63>
<http://new.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/swimming-provision-in-shrewsbury>

Shrewsbury Business Improvement District <http://www.originalshrewsbury.co.uk/BID>

Isochrone maps from Geoinformatics Research Group, University of Heidelberg
<http://www.openrouteservice.org/?pos=-2.758,52.712&zoom=13&layer=B000FTTTTTTTTTTTTT>

Government NPPF “Promoting sustainable transport” sections 29, 30 & 34
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/4-promoting-sustainable-transport/>

1. Introduction

The need to up-grade public swimming facilities in Shrewsbury has been a continuous concern, firstly in the days of Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council (SABC), and since 2009, of the Unitary Authority of Shropshire Council (SC). As a result there are a number of previous documents on Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre (QSFC) and of user views and practices. To this are now added the recently commissioned work by Strategic Leisure (2015)¹ and Sport England's latest Facilities Planning Model (June 2015)². These add a useful dimension to the debate, but do not adequately consider more than the short term (2-7 years from possible earliest construction) and the purely commercial (CapEx, ManEx) elements of proposed facility options. They do not look at the practical effects of location in a town with essentially radial routes, faster than average population growth and a marked preference to travel by foot or cycle where possible. Nor are the views of the town as a whole and of existing facility users considered. Thus only a limited part of a Cost Benefit Analysis, (on which any decision would normally be based), has yet been developed. This report seeks to fill some of those gaps.

There are well-established SC and national policies on sustainability and there are specific characteristics of the town, both of which should influence location of new facilities and reinforce the views expressed by many residents of the catchment area (see 2.1). We would also query certain modelling assumptions and outputs, which lead us to submit this short document presenting our concerns. These reflect on both the location and the capacity of the planned facilities. Our interest is to ensure that Shrewsbury ends up with a facility to be proud of, and which:

- increases the active participation of residents of the town and surrounding area to improve the community's health and well-being
- serves the student population, schools and those with special needs
- contributes to the town's economy through facility users combining their trips for exercise with other purposes which bring trade and vitality to the town
- is a landmark facility that enhances the attractiveness of the town as a tourist destination

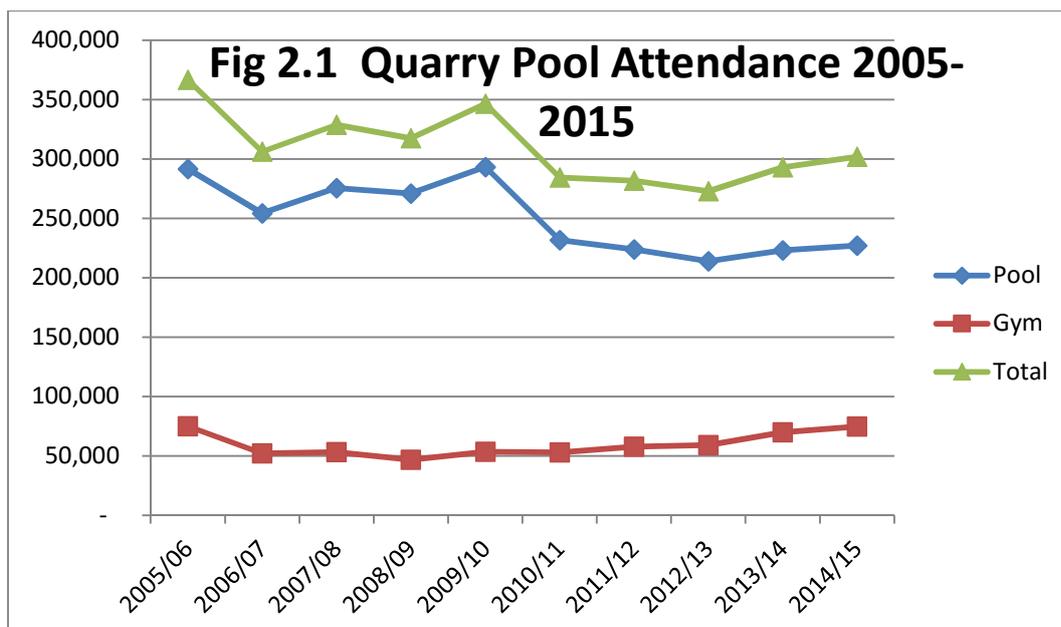
2. Setting the scene – Existing situation

2.1 User numbers

The numbers attending the QSFC have depended on various factors including the condition of the facility, the activities provided and the quality of management. Pre 2005 figures are not accessible, but those from 2005 onwards show that in that year, as a minor refurbishment was completed, numbers reached a peak (see Fig. 2.1) of over 366,000, but fell by over 93,000 by 2010/11, underlining the importance of 'attractiveness' in retaining and increasing participation. Even with only minor repairs and almost no publicity, numbers have risen in the last 12 months both for gym and swimming.

¹ Options for the Provision of Public Swimming (and Fitness) Facilities in Shrewsbury. Shropshire Council March 2015

² Local Assessment of Swimming Pool provision in Shrewsbury. Facilities Planning Model, Final version Shropshire Council June 2015



In the past five years swimming participation has stayed fairly constant, and gym attendance and membership has increased. The number of exercise stations has increased over this period.

In good condition, ten years ago, the pool had 34% more attendees than 2011/12, which would very positively affect profit and loss figures. The Options Report estimates attendance and consequent profit and loss based on a constant attendance as of 2013/14. These do not tie up with the previous history of these facilities.(see also Section 4) or the continued upward trend in usage.

Using the Shrewsbury and Atcham boundaries as the potential catchment area (as does the Options Report/ Facilities Planning modelling), 76% of the population of Shrewsbury live in the main built up areas of the town (postcodes SY1-3).³ Rural dwellers therefore make up around 25% of the catchment and about 22% of those who responded to the most recent consultative survey (Dec 2014⁴). It appears that QSFC users are predominantly urban, or with an urban work or study base. However some people come from much further away, for specific activities. The canoe club has people coming from as far away as Stafford, and Shropshire Sharks from Oswestry and Church Stretton, since the QSFC is the only centre with such clubs and capacity.

75-80% of QSFC users live and/or work in the town, which also reflects the population distribution of the catchment. Existing users are likely to form the core of users of a new facility.

³ This does include Bayston Hill, a satellite of some 7,000 people.

⁴ Shropshire Council and Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre Forum. December 2014

2.2 Information on location preferences

In the past, several peripheral sites have been proposed for a new pool and people have been asked to record whether they prefer a peripheral or central position for such a facility. Two surveys (2007, 2014) asked the question directly of where they would prefer to have a pool. The question was part of a wider survey, publicised in newspapers, radio, on the street, by the pool and in magazines, and included both users and non-users of the facilities. In total some 1468 responses were received. The two surveys were 7 years apart, but both found that some 75% of people wanted a central location for the facility. (see Table 2.2) The main reason is ease of access. The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre’s own survey in 2009 found 88% satisfied or very satisfied with ease of access. Other reasons include the ability to use one visit to the centre of town for many purposes, and simultaneously for differing interests of different family members.

The unsolicited comments given in both the July (Lib Dem) and December 2014 (SC/QSFC) surveys suggest that an edge of town location is a major barrier to future up-take of a new facility. In the former survey 21% of those replying said that they would either be unable or unwilling to travel to an edge of town site. The ‘further comments’ given in the December 2014 survey covered a range of topics that people felt were important, but of those which referred to wanting a specific location for the Swimming and Fitness Centre (not just a ‘liking’ it) over 87% mention wanting to keep the

Table 2.2 Respondent preferences.

	Where would you like a new pool?			Sample number	
	Town centre	Sundorne	Other peripheral		Source
2007	75%		25%	615	SABC Leisure
2014	78%	22%		804	Lib Dem open survey
2015	54%	36%	10%		Shropshire Star
People responded as a result of direct questions on the street, publicity in newspapers and magazines, and word of mouth.					

facility where it is, and only 13% wanted it to move from the town centre. An online survey by the Shropshire Star giving more options found a lesser preference for the Quarry site, but still gave it an 18 point lead over any other site. ***Those in the town and surrounding countryside have unequivocally shown that they prefer a central location. Disregarding this is likely to have significant impact on up-take of the future facility should it be relocated to the edge of town.***

2.3 Existing patterns of travel to the Quarry (Shropshire Council and QSFF survey 2014)

The difference in travel patterns between the rural and urban ways of accessing the town centre is significant (see Fig 2.3). (Totals add up to more than 100% because some people cite more than one option depending on the weather, their available time etc). Those within the urban area (roughly inside the A5/A49) have much more choice in how they get to the town centre, with walking, cycling, public transport (bus) as well as a radial road network converging on the centre. Those further away have less choice, being largely dependent on their own or others’ cars or the bus. A significant

proportion (18%) use the bus for all or some of their visits, and from the Bayston Hill area this rises to almost half (48%). The most common comment of bus users is that they would not use a facility that requires changing buses to reach it, and as there are no cross-town bus routes to Sundorne Sports Village, they would be unlikely to use edge of town facilities.

Whilst 65% of those coming from rural areas always access the Quarry by car (own or dropped off) and only 2% always cycle or walk, only 23% of urban users always come by car and 51% always cycle or walk. Thus rural car-using people (22% of catchment population) can reach an edge of town location, without changing their behaviour, to a greater degree than urban users can.

The majority of existing users would be affected by any move to the edge of town.

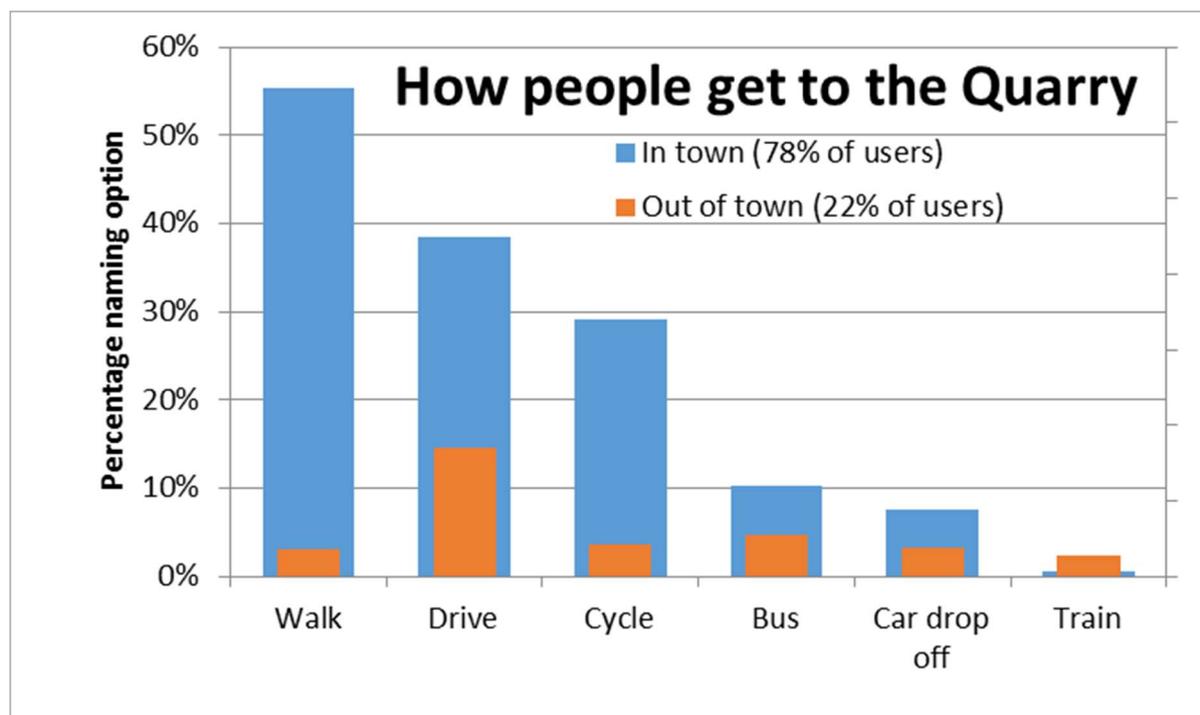


Figure 2.2

Of the urban population some are non-car-owners, and many are car owners who choose not to use their car (Section 3.1). ***On its present site, or one within the town centre the location encourages as many as possible to walk, cycle or use public transport. This is the healthy option both for individuals and the environment.***

2.4 Sustainability and planning policies

Local policies on sustainability and on supporting tourism strongly promote development of entertainment and leisure facilities (among others) in the town centre. For example the first two priorities of Shropshire Council’s Environment and Climate Change Strategy Theme 9 are:

1. Car dependency should be reduced as much as possible. Reduce number and length of journeys
2. Encourage the greater use of more sustainable and lower carbon travel modes.

The Shropshire SAMDev (March 2014) contains the following sustainability objectives –

- Encourage high quality inward investment, and support existing businesses to expand and diversify;
- Encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport;
- Reduce the need of people and businesses to travel;
- Promote community participation in a diverse range of sporting, recreational and cultural activities;
- Create active and healthier communities for all and reduce inequalities in health services;

Similarly **Shropshire Local Development Framework CS6** requires “proposals likely to generate significant levels of traffic to be located in accessible locations where **opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport can be maximised and the need for car based travel to be reduced**”. Clearly these policies do not favour edge of town or out of town developments.

This is reinforced by the **Town Centre and Viability Policy CS15** “priority will be given to identifying and delivering **town centre and edge of centre redevelopment opportunities before less central locations are considered**”.

National Planning Policy Framework section 30 states “Encouragement should be given to solutions which support **reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion**. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should therefore support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, **facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport**.”

Additionally with a drive to build up tourism as a major economic mainstay of the town, the approach of Heart of Shrewsbury “is to build on its existing assets, particularly the heritage offer, independent retailing and the river. Promote and protect the town centre as a key driver of tourism”. Tourism benefits from having all attractions within walking distance.

Moving the Swimming and Fitness Centre to an out-of-town location would be in contradiction to all of the town, county & national policy statements.

2.5 The QSFC and the town

The QSFC and the Quarry Park offer a unique synergy which many appreciate, and which came up many times in the comments people gave in the two recent surveys. This could be built on by having more vibrant café facilities which have a double advantage of facing both into the pool area and out to the park. Being close to the Sixth Form College and with the coming of the university, the need to have good entertainment and fitness facilities easily accessible to students, in their lunch breaks and before or after classes, is vital. There has been no proper survey of the links between QSFC, or SSV, and the commercial and leisure activities of the town. Of those asked what else they did when they came to the pool over half used their visits for more than one purpose. 13% either work or study in the town centre. A third combine visits with shopping, and a similar proportion do other leisure activities, although the way the question was set may have caused some confusion as to whether leisure activities referred to those at the QSFC or elsewhere during a visit to the centre of town. These figures therefore represent a minimum of up-take and a further more specific survey is required. The QSFC would appear to generate at the very least 100,000 more footfall to the town

centre each year. It is extremely unlikely that that would be retained if the starting point for shopping were the SSV. Free parking at the retail parks some 800-1.5 km away from the SSV would lead to more car travel and a reduction of income to local town centre businesses.

A central location allows people make a multi-purpose visit to town, to the benefit of the town economy. A fringe location generally means single purpose visits or further car journeys to reach retail and business premises. A central university needs central swimming and fitness facilities to maximise participation and could combine with other functions such as the Students Union, and community activities.

3. Transport issues

3.1 Car ownership and travel

Much is made in the Options Report of car ownership and the high level of this in Shropshire (82%). This is because Shropshire as a county is more rural than the national average, and rural people have higher car ownership. However, 6-9% of rural households (1800 people) do not have a car and would depend on public transport. (The Options Report p54 says that it may be a challenge for them to access Shrewsbury town centre from outlying areas, but it will be far more challenging for them to access an edge of town site see 4.4). The four wards with the highest percentage of households not owning any car or van are all in urban Shrewsbury- (Castlefields and Ditherington, Quarry and Coton Hill, Harlsecott, Monkmoor). Here some 30% of households (or 6,000 people) do not have cars and depend chiefly on walking, cycling or public transport. Over 2,500 people living within approximately 1 km of the QSFC do not have a car for their household. The largest number of non-car-owning households is therefore within the town. The centre of gravity for these is the centre of town, and most will be disadvantaged by a move to a peripheral site, 4 km from the town centre.

Bayston Hill, the Column and Sutton ward, being the ward with the highest population has the highest number of households without a car or van, and greatest dependence on public transport, as it is more than a normal walking distance into town.

The greatest number of people who cannot depend on car travel are within the urban area. As a result the present patterns of transport to the centre of town tend to be by walking or cycling, with bus users being those of more limited mobility or coming from the points further from the centre. Moving to the periphery of town 4 km away will mean many will be unable to attend creating health inequalities across the town.

Car ownership does not equate to car usage. Many car owners choose not to use their car for every purpose which requires them to leave their home. Many choose to travel by healthier means for short distances, a behaviour further encouraged by having to pay for parking. This aspect is completely ignored by the modelling and the Options Report. Most people CAN travel by car but it

has cost implications to that person as well as to the environment. The risk is that adding a minimum of 4 km to the journey (or 6km by the inner ring road and 10km by the outer one) and offering free parking will push them to travel to a new peripheral facility (SSV) by car, if they go at all. This will add significantly to both the number and length of car journeys. At present the majority of people own cars (82% on average in combined rural and urban context). However, as mentioned in 2.3, only 23% of QSFC users living in the urban area actually choose to use a car exclusively to reach the centre and over half of users never use a car. The DfT Manual for Streets (2007 Section 4.4.1) says that 'walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance or residential areas', but that is not the upper limit and that 'walking offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips, particularly those under 2 km'.

Siting a leisure centre more than 4 km from the centre of town clearly will lead to more of those at present choosing not to use a car, changing to this method of transport. It is beyond a normal 'walkable' distance, the mode of travel for the majority of existing users.

Land adjacent to Shrewsbury Town FC is said to be disadvantaged by 'likely increase in volumes of car journeys, may be hard to access without private transport, potential negative impact on the environment due to increased traffic volumes (Options Report p111, Table 5.26). Exactly the same disadvantages apply to the SSV, but are not mentioned in the analysis of this site (p 113).

The recognition of the impact of increased traffic volumes and parking demand on an out-of-town location should be applied equally to all sites in this situation, not just a selected few while omitting the SSV.

3.2 Travel times

It is clear from the Travel Time Maps that for each mode of transport every of the edge-of-town location excludes significant portions of the town's population. For a 30 minute walk, the town centre location provides the maximum reach, whereas due to geography the SSV site is still more than a 30 minute walk from major population centres in Harlescott Grange, Herongate, Monkmoor, & Belvidere.

The cycling situation is even worse. With a central location the entire town, including the nominally rural Bayston Hill, are within a 20minute cycle ride. Although the north-eastern areas are in the 15 minute range this is mainly via major roads and junctions (A5112, Featherbed Lane, Mount Pleasant Road, & Heathgates Roundabout) that are seriously congested at peak times and have very limited dedicated cycling lanes. Most of the west and south areas move into the red-zone, or even outside normal cycling range, and are likely to cease riding and instead drive through the town or around the ring road.

For most drivers it becomes a significantly longer journey to SSV, while not being very much shorter for many in that sector and subject to significant delays to due to congestion during peak hours. Average journey times will increase and more drivers will find themselves in what the FPM terms the 'decay zone' which will reduce their likelihood of using the alternative facility at all.

Average travel times will increase and users will shift away from sustainable modes of transport toward driving with considerable adverse effect on already congested roads.

3.3 Parking

Parking is one of the issues that raises most complaint and concern and is one of the main reasons given for moving the pools out of town. However this raises several issues.

1. There are over 60 car parking spaces within 2 minutes' walk from the QSFC. A survey over two weeks and at different times of day found that the 25 spaces closest to the QSFC entrance just under 50% were occupied on average. They are more than adequate for disabled and family parking. The lack of use of these spaces is equivalent to a loss of income to SC of some £1,000 per week. The spaces nearest the entrance are usually full when charges end at 1800hrs. There is also free parking with time limits across the foot bridge (3 minutes' walk) and without limits further up Pengwern Road. Furthermore there is free parking in the Sixth Form College car parks round the corner, from 4pm onwards.

There are 61 on-road parking spaces within 2 minutes of the pool entrance⁵, but those nearest to the entrance are on average less than 50% used at any one time and only seldom 100% occupied.

2. Nearly 1,900 dedicated off road spaces are to be found within 10 minutes' walk of the Quarry entrance.

Parking capacity has not been shown to be a problem.

3. The complaint from the public is more that parking is not free, as it is at Sundorne. There, access to the site by bus, foot and cycle is more difficult so parking has been provided. The question then becomes more one of whether the parking around the Quarry for those using the pool should be subsidised in the same way as it is at Sundorne. This was the policy of the SABC who provided a refund of part of the parking charge to QSFC users, recognising that the combined cost was putting people off. If the pools move to SSV where parking is currently free, there is a loss of income to the Council from those who park and swim, or park, swim and shop. This needs to be included in profit and loss.

The issue is less that there is no parking provision than that there is no FREE parking provision. Even when 50% of the parking spaces beside the pool are occupied people still complain about the lack of parking, and may not come to use them.

INCREASING CAR PARKING SPACES INCREASES CAR USAGE. All policies point towards trying to deter car usage where not essential but all the new build

⁵ Including those along the riverside and the Sixth Form roads.

options include expanded car parking rather than encouraging use of alternatives (bus, park and ride, walking/ cycling etc).

Shrewsbury is the county town. People need to be able to drive in from the countryside for a variety of purposes, and also have use of the Park and Ride. There is no evidence given that parking is insufficient, but more that people simply do not want to pay for it on top of the cost of entry to the facility. That cost they can easily see. Moving the pool to the outside of town in order to provide free parking is not a convincing justification, nor is the idea of increasing parking in the Town Centre when the Council is encouraging Park and Ride. ***If in-town parking is inadequate within the policy framework of SC, then it is absurd to remove facilities to the edge of town just to make more travel by car possible.***

P97 5.39 Options Report states that “ The reduced amount of on-site car parking would not comply with current standards for a facility of this scale. The National Planning Policy Framework (Communities and Local Government March 2012) para 39 establishes that destination parking is not a given, but should be modified according to location. “ if setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account:

- *the accessibility of the development;*
- *the type, mix and use of development;*
- *the availability of and opportunities for public transport;*
- *local car ownership levels; and*
- *an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.*

For this reason, leisure complexes such as the new three pool complex designed for the centre of Exeter (a town of similar size to Shrewsbury) do not include car park development. Having a specific amount of parking, especially for a town centre location, is not a regulated given but should be linked to how else the site can be accessed.

SSV needs car parking because it is less accessible to most of the public. The Quarry needs much less because it is much more accessible. The centre of town is much better served by public transport (see below) and most accessible by cycle and foot, so should not be judged by the same yardstick as an out-of-town site. Removing the car parking element from the QSFC new pool option reduces the costs significantly, putting the option on a par with moving it out of town.

The SSV has a significant area of parking, some of which is also used at times by the neighbouring health centre. Generally there is ample space but at times of football tournaments and cycle events it is not sufficient. ***The SWOT analysis of the SSV points out the weakness of loss of some parking spaces to accommodate any new build, and additional parking would be needed for the proposed new pool complex at this site, both of which then significantly increases the capital cost, not yet included in the proposal against which other sites are judged.***

3.4 Bus routes

Bus routes (Fig 3.1) converge on the centre of town. Both rural and urban households who can access the bus routes are brought to within 800m of the QSFC. This means people from all over the area can reach this point which is within 10 minutes' walk of the QSFC (DfT Manual for Streets see sec 3.1). For Sundorne there are two routes which pass the entrance to the grounds every 75 & 120 minutes respectively. The councillor for Sundorne has asked on many occasions for an improved service to the area, but no increase in service has been forthcoming. It is not known to what degree the

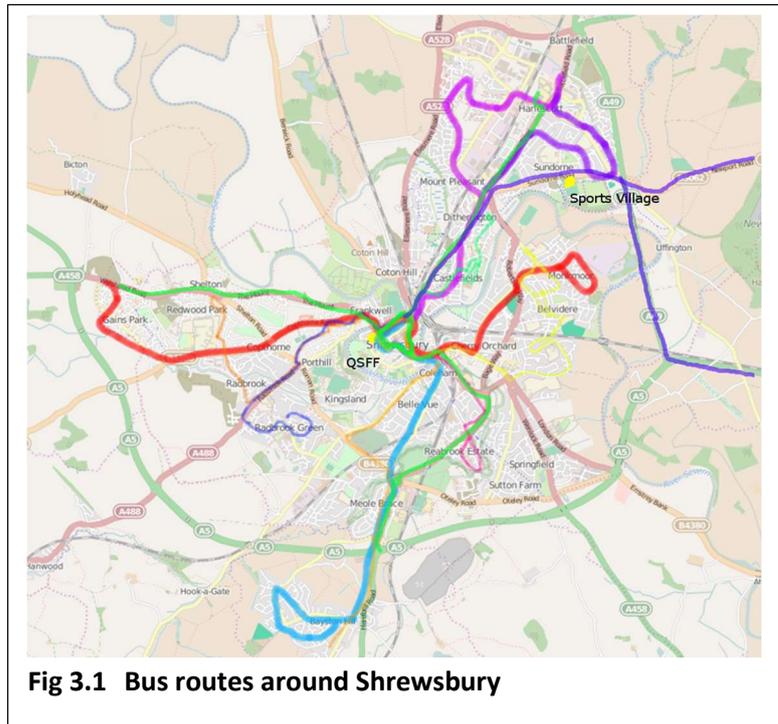


Fig 3.1 Bus routes around Shrewsbury

route is already subsidised, but to increase the number of services or routes which serve the area implies significant cost to the Council. At present the trend is reduction in subsidies and of routes, so it is not likely that a bus company would offer new routes or frequency of service without incentive.

A central location is served by the maximum number of bus routes, including the Park and Ride. The bus station is within 10 minutes' walk of the QSFC site. The train station is within 12 minutes' walk. Public transport offers a convenient option for the maximum number of people from the greatest range of starting points to reach the town centre. A peripheral location does not have the same advantage and only a few areas are served without needing to change buses in the centre of town.

A second consideration with buses is the duration of services. Most routes stop at 1800 or 1900 hours and do not operate on Sundays or Bank Holidays. This severely constrains usage of facilities for those dependent on buses, especially at those times when they are not working. A relatively frequent service which runs later does pass within 23 minutes' walk of the SSV.

Most bus services cannot be relied upon for access much after normal working hours, which is exactly the time most people are free to take exercise and bring the whole family to swim or use sports facilities.

Provision of additional (subsidised) bus routes or services would need to be included in any costing of a new location. Increasing the duration of services

from the centre of town would serve little purpose if the feeder services into the town centre were not working.

4. FPM assumptions and Usage projections

The Facilities Planning Model (FPM) is used in the Options Report as a planning tool to inform the process of deciding where major new community sports facilities are needed. It is therefore very influential in any decision-making, although it is stated that the model output should be seen in the light of local circumstances and aspirations, two aspects of many which it does not or cannot represent accurately.

4.1 Catchments and population growth

The catchment population for the facilities is critical to the modelling and the conclusions reached. There seems to be some confusion over catchments. The Options Report states that there are 180,000 people living in the county within an un-congested 20 minutes' drive-time of Shrewsbury⁶. The FPM uses 30 minutes for each mode of travel⁷ but only a base population of 102,000 in 2011. But then in Appendix 1⁸ on p25 it gives the catchment boundaries for swimming pools as a 15 minute drive time, 10 minute walking time and 15 minute bus car/equivalent time. The explanation of the model in the 2015 FPM Report⁹ is copied verbatim from the 2008 report¹⁰. In both cases the catchment area travel pattern is said to be based on the same unreferenced survey, and appear to be applied generically to all Sport England models. ***There seems to be some confusion as to catchment definition but this has a big effect on the base population being considered. The catchment chosen starts off with the smallest base population.***

The Options report and FPM talk of Shropshire Central which is a smaller area which coincides with the old Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough (SABC). This had a population of 102,382 in 2011 which appears to be the base used in Sport England and Strategic Leisure work. Post codes SY1-5, approximately reach mid-way to other small urban areas with swimming facilities and had a 2011 population of 123,216 (Nomis 2015). They include villages such as Baschurch and Ruyton XI Towns which have over 4,000 people and look to Shrewsbury for services, being less than 15 minutes away, but were not in the SABC. ***Taking the catchment as SABC gives the lowest catchment population estimate and risks an under-estimate of required capacities, and of income.***

If there are 180,000 people within 20 minutes then according to the catchment parameters on p 4 of the FPM report, the total catchment population should exceed this figure before applying distance decay and

⁶ P54 of the Options Report.

⁷ P4 FPM Report June 2015

⁸ P25 FPM Report June 2015

⁹ Sport England FPM June 2015 p 3 and 4

¹⁰ Sport England Local Assessment of Swimming Pools. Facility Planning Model Dec 2008

availability of other facilities. The sensitivity analysis only looks at a 10% variation. There is a lack of consistency over catchment definition and population throughout the reports.

Growth rates suggest that, at the rate of 2001-2011 the SABC population would grow to about 116,000 by 2026, (ONS rate ¹¹for Shrewsbury and Atcham of 8.3% over ten years) without the influx to new SUEs, and the university. The new developments to the South-west and South will house over 26,000 people. Even if only half of these are newcomers from other areas, the population rises then to 129,000 not the 118,000 used in modelling. With a time frame of only ten years for the model (perhaps five or six years post construction) the predictions being made are very likely to under-estimate demand. Given that the facility will have a working life of 25-50 years (2041-2066), predictions of usage and growth to 2026 will be totally inadequate in assessing the necessary capacity of the facilities. They also predict a significant continued fall in up-take of swimming (only half the growth rate), or an effective drop in participation when the aim is to increase it.

A minimum growth rate seems to have been assumed, risking further under-estimates. The major part of planned growth is weighted towards the south and west, the furthest area from the SSV.

4.2 Population distribution and projections

The planned developments for Shrewsbury over the next ten years concentrate new housing particularly to the South and West. The West is also the area noted by SC to have the poorest provision of sports facilities. The river forms an obstacle with frequent traffic congestion on the inner ring road bridge and Ditherington Road to the Heathgates roundabout (gateway to Sundorne). This will deter many from travelling to the North-East edge of town from the Centre, West, and South.

Planning to shift existing provision considerably further to the North-East will disadvantage the new urban extensions and most of the existing customer base in the centre, south, and west of the town.

In terms of population distribution, peripheral sites by definition have fewer people living within a short distance of them. In relation to the Quarry, the Options Report states that 61% of people live within 2 km of the town centre and 93% within 5 km (¹²). Since SSV is more than 4 km from the centre, by many fewer people live near it. The model assumes a distance/ time decay for catchment populations. The travel times given are for each mode of transport, with 60% only wanting to travel for 10 minutes (see 4.2), 87% up to 20 minutes and only 5% prepared to travel over 30 minutes. Thus the nearer people live to a facility the more likely they are to use it and to use it regularly (demonstrated by the mapping of members and casual swimmers in the report). There are 60% more people living within 2 km of the Quarry site than of the SSV.

¹¹ This rate was estimated before the planned urban expansion of Shrewsbury and the coming of the university.

¹² Options Report p 30. Using Sport England Market Segmentation report 2015.

A central site can conveniently serve a much larger proportion of the population than a peripheral one, and can encourage more regular use.

It is not just that there are more people living near the centre of town and that proximity has a big effect on the regularity of use. It is also the market segments which are important. Those groups which are least likely to use the facilities (half as likely or less)¹³ are twice as common within 2 km of the SSV than within a 2 km radius of QSFC. This may be from a combination of affordability and lifestyle.

The nearest households to a facility will only be the most likely to use it, in a homogenous population. Some groups take up exercise more than others. The provision of facilities will be most successful if it is in an area which serves the largest number of people conveniently and where it is best placed to serve the largest number of people likely to use the facility.

4.3 FPM application.

It is assumed that Run 1 is mainly to calibrate the model and see that the assumptions and outputs are right as well as to define the degree to which demand is satisfied. The travel mode appears to be taken as 84% by car for all runs. This clearly runs contrary to the patterns of travel found in both the 2007 and 2014/5 surveys. ***No attempt has been made to alter the model to fit the locally found patterns of travel and therefore as a calibration to validate later runs, the model is clearly not representing the conditions found, whether it is an assumption or an output that does not fit the local situation. Any conclusions using this model will be false.***

It is clear that attendance is also closely related to travel time according to the model explanation. Yet the model gives exactly the same attendance figure (398,246) for a new build near the centre of gravity for the catchment as it does for 3 peripheral options 4-5.5km away, but not including the SSV. ***This suggests that the model is unable to take into account population densities combined with the transport network and confining nature of the river and bridges, and works only at the most basic level.***

In that the 'status quo' and a facility with £2.3 million or £12.8 million of work done are given the same attractiveness weighting as the facility in its present run-down condition suggests a seriously flawed model. Previous history of the QSFC shows that when in good condition there is a marked increase in participation. Actual attendance figures show that there have previously been 34% more visits with far lesser changes than the up-grade would give. The Options Report and Shropshire Council up-dated figures on August 2015 show no change at all. The sensitivity analysis in the Options Report only looks at the effects of a +/-10% variation on profit and loss figures. This is a small variation compared with the effects of even a small renovation indicated from historical

¹³ See Sport England Market Segmentation characteristic groups.

attendance data. **Attractiveness weighting seems to be inconsistently applied and its historical evidence shows it should be applied to both refurbishment and up-grading of the Quarry Pool. This has a major effect on financial predictions.**

4.4 Usage projections.

The Facilities Planning Model provides the following numbers of participants per year and the profit and loss figures have also been estimated by SC based on different figures. Neither tie up with the present attendance figures (see Table 4.1)

	Options Report June 2015	FPM June 2015 pool	Present 'dry' use	Present 'wet'	Total
Existing Operation	292,861	257,000	75,000	227,000	302,000
Refurbishment Quarry	292,861				
Renovate Quarry	292,861				
New Build Quarry	398,248	344,000			
STFC	398,248				
Clayton Way	398,248				
Ellesmere Road	398,248				
Shrewsbury Sports Village with pool	486,846*	322,000	250,000		250,000

* includes existing patronage

At present the combined attendance at the SSV and the Quarry is some 552,000 visits per year. The prediction is that if the pool moves to the Sport Village, and the QSFC closes, attendance will be some 487,000, or a 13% reduction in total users.

The primary aim of the new facilities is to ‘increase participation levels to impact positively on community health and well-being.’ The predicted usage at the SSV of 487,000 in 2020 in the Options Report is considerably less than the total activity at the Quarry and SSV in 2015. This option therefore indicates a CONSIDERABLE DECREASE in total participation levels.

Similarly the model predicts attendance of some 322,000 swim visits in 2026 if the facilities are located at Sundorne, and 344,000 if they are located at the QSFC. If the present gym/sport attendance is added for both sites and Sundorne continues to function as well as a new Quarry pool then the total attendance using present day gym figures and modelled swimming ones, will total some 572,000 at Sundorne alone, but 669,000 or 17% more in total if the pool facilities remain at the Quarry site (see Table 4.2). If the Option Report predicted attendance figures are used, on which the financial estimates are based, then the difference is even greater. Combining all activities at Sundorne Strategic Leisure give a figure of 486,846 visits, but the combined activity is 648,248 or 33% higher if the pools remain as new build at the Quarry, and Sundorne continues to operate at its present levels. With either set of figures (it is not known how the Options Report figures are derived) then keeping the two facilities separate significantly increases the overall activity levels which are expected. This is also true with the Options report figures if the QSFC is only refurbished or up-graded.

Table 4.2		Total attendances on opening.		
Option	1. All facilities at SSV	2. Keeping Quarry and SSV both operating.	Participation rate with two sites.	
FPM swimming attendance	322,000	344,000		
Present sport/gym attendance	250,000	75,000		
Sundorne continued operation		250,000		
Based on model outputs + existing gym/sports				
Total numbers of activity visits	572,000	669,000	+17%	
Based on Options Report 2015 figures.				
Options Report activity visits	SSV 486,846	Quarry new 398,248		
Total numbers of activity visits	486,846	648,248	+33%	

The FPM prediction indicates that fewer people will access the edge of town location than a central location if all activities are concentrated there. The prime aim of the new facilities to increase participation will not be achieved (let alone maintaining existing levels). Keeping a central location for swimming and some gym facilities greatly increases the level of participation, using either the FPM or the Options Report figures.

There is a permanent assumption that an ageing population means lower participation, and so lower rate of growth of demand compared with population growth (FPM page 24). However the main aims are to get more children and elderly active, so this assumption seems to predict ineffective efforts to achieve the aims even before starting. Elderly and young are more likely to be only able to access facilities by walking, cycling or public transport, further disenfranchising them with an edge of town location. In the 2009 model 84% of unmet demand was from residents who do not have access to a car and live beyond walking distance, and 16% from residents who have access to a car but choose not to travel because of distance.

Target groups of young and elderly are particularly likely to be negatively affected by a move to the edge of town. Students are being actively discouraged from having a car, and an out-of-town site for the leisure facility will discourage them and other groups dependent on public transport from attending unless there is a guaranteed frequent bus service into and out of the town centre, from 7 am till 10pm 7 days a week.

The lack of statistical weighting for location alongside that for attractiveness means that any disadvantages of a peripheral site have largely been ignored.

4.5 Unmet demand and pool capacity

The FPM Run 1 identifies the main area of unmet demand with the present central location as being on the outskirts of the town and 'particularly to the North-east' (p11 FPM June 2015). This is

attributed to difficulty to reach the facility not lack of pool capacity, and so implies a difficulty of people from the edge of town to access the centre, despite provision of public transport and a maximum distance of 4-5 km. If the pool is moved to the North-east (SSV), (next door to an existing privately run pool) those in the centre (more of whom are without cars) will presumably face the same problem in reverse, being less able to reach the new facility. People in the town wards to the South and West, including the new SUEs will have to travel even further, either across town or round it. The barrier for those living in these areas using public transport is, (as has already been mentioned) even greater. Yet in Run 3 the area of unmet demand is predicted to shift far out of town on the West side, only being felt in the rural area around Pontesbury some 13 km away from the centre.

The level and areas of unmet demand do not seem consistent in logic between Runs 1 and 3. If there is unmet demand near the SSV with the present town centre location, then this would be even truer for the non-car owning households and DE groups of the growing populations in and beyond the town centre to the West and South if the facility moves to the SSV.

The population of Shrewsbury is predicted to grow by 8.3% according to the ONS, and although it is higher than for the period 2001-2011 it does not allow for new housing developments for some 26,000 residents, since scheduled for the town before 2026. The new build at the Quarry site would be already more than comfortably full from the day it opens, with only two pools. (82% compared with 70% comfort factor threshold). At the new proposed site (SSV) the same configuration would still be 77% full on opening both taking the opening year as 2026. This would suggest that especially if modelled population and growth rates are under- rather than over-estimates, capacity will need to be increased almost as soon as the proposed facilities are built, and should be re-assessed just as urgently as the location itself.

The proposed two pool solution appears to exceed 'comfortable' limits immediately on completion. Capacity is as much of a concern in the proposals made as is the location and only takes into consideration the demands of the general population not specific activities (see 5.2).

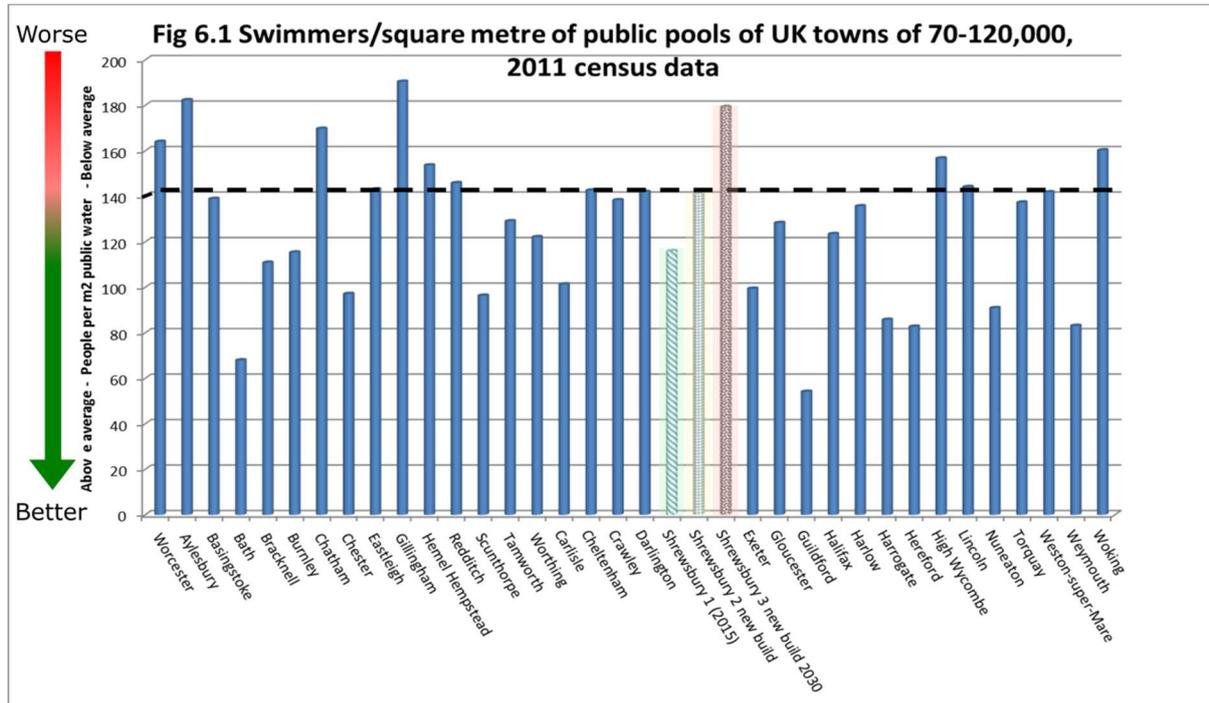
The FPM Model does not take any account of non-residents (ie people from outside the area in a town dedicated to increasing tourism) nor of educational requirements within the school curriculum (30 schools using it). Nor does it account for club activities, so is constrained in its relevance where club and education activities already exceed the capacity of the four pools, and lead to overspill to the Shrewsbury School pool which is now also at full capacity.

The omission of club use, educational curricula activities and potential tourist visits severely limits the relevance of the modelled conclusions

5. Water area and gym capacity.

5.1 Changes in capacity – and other towns of similar size

The reduction from four pools to two results in a 22% loss of water area. This moves Shrewsbury from being a town with slightly above average provision per head with public swimming at present (115/m²), to one with below average immediately and far below average by 2030. This refers to towns of similar size (see Fig 6.1). In terms of the surrounding small towns of Shropshire their provision is far superior (average 45.6/m²), but they do not have any nearby private facilities. However private facilities will tend to be developed only where there is insufficient public provision, and there is more than adequate provision for these towns.



5.2 Swimming schedules and impact of reduced area

The current provision of three separate swimming and one teaching pool can accommodate simultaneous use by diverse groups such as children's swimming lessons, over 50's swimming and recreational swimming during the day, and Masters' Swimming, children's wave rave and 'This Girls can' sessions at the same time in the evenings. Most club activities require the whole pool because of numbers (e.g. Masters), safety (sub-aqua, canoeing, canoe polo), noise (aquazumba), or social need (some disabled swimmers), and can only take place outside normal working hours. Reducing both the number of pools and water area will lead to reduced flexibility of water space with consequent scheduling clashes affecting availability and diversity for all facility users.

Presently, the Priory Claremont and Teaching pools are fully used throughout the day for from 09:00 to 15:45 by 30 local schools plus 38 hours of Shropshire Swim Academy each week. Ladies only swimming, Aquatots, Parent & baby, and Adult-only lessons have also to be fitted in Monday to Friday. This could not be accommodated with two pools and adequate public swimming included. To this must be added the difficulty of keeping equitable temperatures in two pools for a wide variety of activities.

Club demand is at present over 80 session hours a week¹⁴ including those sessions at present having to be held outside QSFC. This does not include the suppressed demand which still exists – some clubs not being fully accommodated anywhere at present. .

So far water-based exercise classes have been little developed (there were none in 2014), but are becoming popular. QSFC marketing has been extremely limited, so demand has yet a long way to go to reach the levels of 2005/6. Scheduling needs to take account of future demand, on top of what exists at present. The QSFC is home to many clubs some of whose members come from far away. If they do not get adequate, convenient time, participation will decline. At present three quarters of total weekly pool time (over 320 session hours) is taken up with specific defined activities which are not casual or fun swimming.

To accommodate even the present level of demand in two pools would tend to squeeze out the casual swimmers who are generally the more elderly, or mothers with pre-school children. Children who come for the excitement of flumes and diving would lose these. These groups are targets for increased active participation but will be negatively affected.

There is a vibrant club demand for water sports based at the Quarry. At present they are constrained by available pool time. Any scheduling for the future needs to take into account their present and expanding demand.

5.3 Effect on gym user numbers of relocation and of new facilities

The pattern of gym provision in town is changing fast. In recent weeks 3 substantial new gyms have opened or plan to open shortly. These include Simply Gym (behind Sundorne B&Q), Exercise 4 Less (Sundorne Retail Park) and Anytime Fitness Shrewsbury (Montgomery Towers near the Quarry). The first two will offer competition with the existing SSV facility and the third one with the Quarry. The impacts remain to be seen, but two gyms immediately to the North and west of the SSV are likely to attract many of the potential customers in offices and households of Bagley, Harlescott and Battlefield wards, the main catchment area for SSV- beyond Sundorne ward. Because there are many gyms now around the town, those who use the central facility at the Quarry do so largely for the convenience of its location. Over a third of Quarry gym users (75,000 visits/year) are Sixth Form students or people who work in town for whom it is quick and easy to get to the gym for a work-out. Of the remainder, many live within easy reach (less than 2km), and all are unlikely to transfer to the SSV (requiring a longer commute), but more likely to shift to another town centre gym. Thus the contribution of gym users to attendance figures at both SSV and the Quarry may reduce, and if the Quarry is closed the present participants there cannot be regarded as likely to shift to the SSV.

If gym usage is being included in attendance projections the present changes in local gym provision need to be considered. Substantial new commercial gyms will aim to capture some of the existing market. Two are close to the

¹⁴ 'Session Hours' are based on Quarry and Priory Pools each being counted as pools split in two. One hour of half the pool =1hour, one hour of the whole pool = 2 hours

proposed SSV site and one to the Quarry. Those living or working in the town centre are not likely to transfer their custom to an edge-of-town facility when there is good capacity nearer to them.

6. Special user groups

6.1 Schools - Town centre, peripheral and rural

Whilst there are some 30+ schools that use the QSFC, most use buses to reach the centre, or use a pool that is more accessible by a short walk from their site. Thus St George's and Woodfield now use the Shrewsbury School Pool. Two other town centre schools use the QSFC by walking. The coach parking by St Chad's is adequate for some 4-5 buses at a time which is sufficient for school visits. If the facilities move to Sundorne these schools (ca 1000 pupils) would be unable to walk to the more distant facilities and would have to start to use buses or decide not to offer swimming as a curricular activity. At the SSV there is one primary school within walking distance along a very busy road.

Most schools will have to access the pools by bus wherever they are sited. Two would have to transfer from walking to bus.

6.2 Disabled – Views and access regulations

The main disability group using the QSFC is the Shropshire Sharks who have provided feedback on their views on the QSFC and preferred location. These have some 50-60 members from all over the county. There is no club in Oswestry or Telford. They cater for both mental and physical disability, and have two hours (1700-1900 hrs) of pool time on a Thursday evening. They find they need this long because their clients all have to depend on others to get to the pool and some therefore cannot get there until after working hours. Clients come in series, over a period of time, some swimming for the full two hours, but others having only half an hour or so. They do not find access a problem, in terms of parking and within the building, but find the provision of only one disabled changing room a constraint as people have to queue to use it.

They are keen to retain a central location as, for most, the trip to Sundorne will be more expensive. For those who come by bus, the complication of a change of buses and having to get off at the right stop is a complication they would be unable to cope with. One or two cycle in and would also not be able to get as far as Sundorne. About a third make their own way in to town for swimming. The club committee are also concerned that, if there were only two pools, their allocated time would be reduced. They also fear that with greater pressure on the facility there would be a significant chance that prices might be put up. Fewer would then be able to afford to come. Also with the four pools and adequate time, the parents/siblings of clients can swim at the same time as the group has the run of the whole pool. Care would be needed in scheduling with only two pools, to see that this group can get adequate time and full use of all lanes.

The question of village changing was raised also as carers need to be able to accompany their charges. Initially it was thought that village changing would make this easier. However it was then recognised that with a group of clients some of whom can display challenging or inappropriate behaviour, having family rooms and single sex changing is more suitable. For the same reasons,

sharing a pool split into two halves (to increase capacity in a two-pool solution) is also not a desirable option.

Disabled access at the Quarry is not regarded as a major problem by disability groups, but limited disabled changing facilities and any move away from the centre of town are.

6.3 Ante-natal and toddlers

Mother and toddler sessions have recently re-started up at QSFC after a long period without them. This has been a major omission when one looks at the number of ante-natal and post-natal classes the private clubs offer. These not only bring people in but get people together and establish a café culture increasing centre income. (Shrewsbury Club, next door to the potential SSV site, offer nine aquarobics classes a week for mums, with a crèche).

Mums note that cold water and cheerless, grubby changing rooms have been a disincentive at the QSFC. On the other hand, the capacity and range of options encourage them to come. Their fear is that when reduced to two pools the times when they will have whole-pool dedicated space may be short or non-existent. QSFC did have a crèche several years ago but this closed as user numbers declined, and for a while there was no room for it. This has now changed with the renovation of the 'Functions room' but so far no crèche has been re-established.

Parents accompanying very young children and babies is a market group whose demand is not presently being addressed and which have great potential wherever the new facility is located.

7. Costs and finance implications

7.1 General overview of the financial forecasts

The figures presented in the report are forecasts, some figures can be forecast with reasonable accuracy, mainly the costings, and some figures are less certain, the revenues for which a facility planning modelling tool has been used to estimate number of participants.

No forecasts have been developed for options 1-1A, the refurbishment and redevelopment. It is the Forum's opinion that before any decision is made on the future of the pool the refurbishment and redevelopment forecasts should be reviewed and revised. The financial impact of the differing options in the report is narrowly defined. The report concentrates on the financial impact of the various options from the point of view of the operators of pool and sport facility; it does not address user costs such as increased travel time and cost nor the wider economic impact of siting the pool at the different locations.

Certification of the figures and cost assumptions appears not to have been validated. The Forum notes a number of errors and inconsistencies in the forecasts and assumptions. In the commercial world where forecasts are produced to support a project of this size and public interest, it would be normal for the figures to be reviewed and certified by a named independent accountant. It is of great concern that no financing or depreciation costs have been incorporated into the figures.

It is the Forum's opinion that the figures in the consultation document financial forecasts should be reviewed by an independent accountant to certify that they are consistent with the assumptions before a final decision is made on the future of the pool. The financial scope of all options should be consistent.

7.2 Revenue assumptions

The Forum believes the revenue assumptions are flawed. The Sport England Facility Planning Model is a generic modelling tool and does not take into account the effect of location on the demand for facilities. The Shrewsbury specific and facility mix factors have been overlooked in arriving at the forecast revenues.

Revenue derived from swimming in all new build options amounts to £626,933 based on a swimming throughput figure of 196,396 users. The current swimming throughput figure amounts to 222,929. The forecast swimming revenue figures therefore seem overly conservative and would appear to be erroneous and under-estimating the revenue implications of all options.

All forecast revenue increases are deemed to come from increased health and fitness suite activity although there is no evidential basis for the proposed increased use. The source of these participation estimates is unclear but not apparently derived from the FPM. The forecast revenue from the 50 station fitness suite at the Sports Village is £513,199 based on a throughput of 280,450 users; all other 50 station options have revenue figures of £374,823 based on throughput figures of 191,850 users, a difference of £138,376 and 88,600 users however options 1 and 1A when reviewed as running alongside ongoing use at the SSV would indicate an increase in overall revenue.

Strategic leisure have included the existing members of the Sports Village current fitness suite in their revenue forecasts, for the SSV only, but exclude them from any other options which may result in multiple facilities. Only marginal revenue gains can be included in the forecast. Put another way they are double counting existing income and this extra revenue should be discounted when comparing options.

As it stands, the Options report does not provide Shropshire Council with a sound financial basis on which to make a decision on the provision of public swimming and fitness facilities in Shrewsbury.

7.3 Increased travel and environmental costs with peripheral location

All cost calculations in the Options Report refer to costs to the Council, the Leisure Trust and Serco as the operators/ managers/ owners. No mention is made of the additional costs to users if the facility moves to the edge of town and these are significant.

This will be on average an additional £2.30¹⁵ per trip, but is a less obvious cost than that for parking in the town centre (£1.20-2.50).

¹⁵ Government Business mileage allowance rates 2014 44p/mile.

In addition to the personal cost and wasted for users, there are environmental costs.

Increased car journeys are estimated to be 80-100,000 a year. At an average of 5 miles each way (Options Report average travel distance) that is some 800,000 to ONE MILLION more miles travelled around Shrewsbury to access fitness facilities - equivalent to some 36 tonnes of CO₂.¹⁶

The assumptions of the Facilities Planning Model (FPM) are that 84% of visits will be by car. This means according to the model, car journeys to the SSV would approximately double, leading to almost 400,000 visits by car a year. Sundorne Road is already often congested. ***Any works to accommodate additional traffic here would need to be included in the costings associated with development of the SSV option. To this should be added the environmental costs of higher carbon emissions, more cross-town journeys and more people opting for longer journeys via the outer ring road to avoid congested areas. All national and local policies are opposed to this. It must be asked whether the council's policies are purely cosmetic?***

7.4 Health implications of user projections

The Options Report states in paragraph 2.136 that increasing participation in physical activity would reduce the total health costs of inactivity, which in Shropshire on an annual basis are £4,449,622. However, the likely effect of moving swimming provision to SSV is predicted (see Table 4.2) to result in a drop of total attendance by as much as 100-160,000. The consequence is extra costs on the Local Authority, Department of Work & Pensions and the already overburdened NHS Trust.

The economic cost implications of physical inactivity and an inactive lifestyle already stress health & social care budgets. Inactivity also has consequences on the wider economy as a result of sickness, absence and premature deaths of productive individuals, costs to the individuals themselves, and the loss of productivity of their carers.

As in the past, more people are likely to go back to swimming in the River Severn, with all the inherent risks. More elderly and disabled people will have to cease employment, also more people will continue to suffer from obesity and increased cardiovascular disease and diabetes, as well as arthritis, back pain and dementia; according to reports from the Royal College of Physicians (RCP¹⁷) and National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE¹⁸).

The Department of Health (DOH) said in 2008 that the annual cost of physical inactivity was £5 million for every primary care trust in England. With the likely loss of footfall and revenue, as well as the higher health & safety costs

¹⁶ Rates according to Carbon Independent 2015

¹⁷ Royal College of Physicians. Exercise for life: physical activity in health and disease. London: RCP, 2012

¹⁸ Physical activity: exercise referral schemes - NICE guidelines [PH54] Published date: September 2014

of moving the pool out of town, this will impose an unacceptable burden on future generations of Salopians.

8. Opportunities for consideration – The future could be brighter!

8.1 Town Centre Support

The town centre has remained a focal point for its residents and visitors for many aspects of civic activity. By accident of geography, it is contained by the River, delineated by radial public transport links and benefits from centralised public open spaces. The Town Council, residents, the retail and business community support the maintenance of this established and vibrant centralised model. The vibrancy of the model relies on a multitude of contributions from all aspects of social interaction, resulting in an outcome which is significantly larger than the sum of its parts. The Quarry Pool and Fitness Centre is one such contributing factor to this civic ‘whole’ and plays a significant beneficial role. The prospect of relocating this element of civic life to the town’s periphery would run contra to years of pragmatic civic planning.

The ‘Options’ documents clearly demonstrates in its summary conclusions the advantages of a ‘town centre’ solution including an increase in facility usage, but then concludes that the peripheral site is clearly the best option, para 6.19. The basis for this conclusion is not validated and by reference to the previous sections of this response document, it is clearly erroneous and based on the selective misuse of statistical data and analysis. Notwithstanding this bias, it is clear that the potential offered by the redevelopment of a pool based leisure facility in the town centre is real and significant. For this reason a central location has been recommended by the Shrewsbury Town Council, the Shropshire Community Leisure trust, the Civic Society, BID (representing some 700 businesses in the town), and a variety of other civil society organisations.

The Town Councillors have stated their support for retaining a water based leisure facility within the town centre core and, as key stakeholders, have the opportunity to support the ‘town centre’ redevelopment, in practical terms, by offering assistance to the Shropshire Council in locating suitable and economically viable sites for such a redevelopment. This would enable the town to have a new and iconic landmark destination for active leisure within the town centre. ***This is an opportunity which should not be missed or understated and the councillors, both at town and county level, should make this a joint priority.***

8.2 The Design Brief

The refurbishment, partial or otherwise, or new build option on the existing site provide an opportunity to reappraise the need for water based leisure in the town for the foreseeable future. The usage projections within the ‘Options’ document extend only to the mid 2020’s. Given that the life of any facility will be measured as providing a 50 + year life span, it is short sighted for the proposed ‘design brief’ to be so constrained. Wherever the facility materialises, town centre or the periphery, its ‘design brief’ should reflect the anticipated growth of population in the town and its catchment area until 2066.

The current usage patterns of the leisure facility suggest that the proposed new build options are unlikely to fulfil the current basic demand (see above section 5 and 6). Previous refurbishment activity indicates an upswing in public activity after refurbishment, regardless of location. It is clear that the 'new build' design brief is unlikely to be successful due to limited projections. To proceed with the replacement proposals based on the current brief is clearly flawed. ***The design brief should be reviewed prior to the formulation of a final decision on the scope of the replacement facility to ensure that it is based on accurate projections of current and proposed usage to 2066.***

8.3 Town Centre Support – Synergy between River and Town Centre options.

The Severn provides a unique opportunity for the residents of Shrewsbury, Shropshire and its tourism industry, for the town centre as it remains largely accessible by foot, cycle and car. Shrewsbury has recently been named the 2nd happiest place to live for its sense of community and recreational facilities. It was also the healthiest town to live in partly because of its leisure centres and health services and the extent to which they encouraged healthy choices, promoted social interaction, provided access to health advice and promoted positive mental wellbeing. The original development of a pool complex in the town centre reflected the Victorian enthusiasm for water based leisure; swimming, rowing, canoeing, walking to cite the obvious activities. It is clear that the relationship between town and river remains strong and vibrant and reflected in the usage of the existing Quarry Leisure facility. A relocation of the facility to the periphery of the town will break this long standing relationship to the detriment of the town and tourism facility users.

The 'Options' document whilst acknowledging the positive benefits of a 'town centre' site, concludes by evaluating only 2 no. 'new build' sites; the existing Quarry Pool location and the Riverside complex. This suggests an acutely limited view of the potential new 'town centre' development sites. The land adjacent the existing pool complex provides both refurbishment, redevelopment and new build options which appear to have been discounted. In addition to these 'Quarry' centric sites, the Mountfield public open spaces provide similar accessible land that could be made available for a new build facility, maintaining and offering potential for the expansion of water based leisure activity adjacent the River. It is located close to a foot bridge to the town centre and rail and bus services, has clear parking benefits and offers visitors to the town centre for retail activity easy access to active leisure. ***An open, public and thorough appraisal of potential refurbishment, renovation and new build sites within the town centre should be undertaken prior to a final decision on the replacement facility to ensure that the full potential of the proposed development is achieved.***

8.4 Town Centre Development and Business Opportunities

The 'Options' documentation makes no effort to consider the potential for including within the redevelopment proposals, the potential for partnering with both public and private organisations who benefit in a lively and sustainable town centre. For example, whilst the Riverside complex languishes from under-utilisation the opportunity for a joint redevelopment of a retail and leisure facility on this site is an obvious example of how a more creative approach to the procurement

process of providing water based leisure to the town centre. The 'Options' document dismisses the development of this site as 'too complicated'. There is little evidence of any lateral thinking by the 'Options' team to use the opportunities of the 'market place' to enhance the financial sustainability of a town centre leisure facility by introducing private capital into the project.

The existing leisure facility site lies within an active 'entertainment oriented' public park with significant public participation in a wide range of commercial activities throughout the summer. The potential for including mutually compatible facilities within the refurbishment/renovation/new build options is a clear and obvious opportunity to help ensure the financial sustainability of any redevelopment. SC want the site to be complementary to other leisure and recreational facilities in town, and the Quarry site offers opportunities to link to the Park Run, Boot Camp Club, rowing, paddling pool, as well as individual runners, cyclists and walkers. The Mountfield site is located adjacent the West Mids showground offering obvious mutual benefits for leisure and commercial leisure activities and yet this potential does not appear to have been investigated. Clearly the maximum potential benefit between the leisure facility, the prosperity of the town and commercial activity lies with a town centre solution and would be lost if a peripheral site is chosen. ***None of the options considered reflect the potential for working with the private sector or for expanding the brief to include commercial activity which could introduce a funding stream to assist in the re-provision of these leisure facilities.***