

Sports Facilities Strategy 2022-30



Foreword

Most of our sports facilities date from the 1980s when Ipswich Borough Council made a significant investment which has served the Borough well. However, these facilities are now tired and inefficient, and they don't match the modern facilities that have been developed more recently elsewhere. Its time to reinvest in sports facilities for the people of Ipswich.

The Coronavirus Pandemic hit Council services and residents' activity levels hard – the latest Sport England data shows that Ipswich is the most inactive area in the East of England. Ipswich continues to have poorer health and lower life expectancy than other parts of Suffolk. The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy we adopted in March 2022, sets out how we will work alongside our partners to tackle this and high-quality facilities are a key part of this work. We want all Ipswich residents to have access to opportunities to improve their quality of life and ability to live long and independent lives.

In 2019 we also pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030 and this Sports Facilities Strategy will help us achieve that as we reduce the carbon footprint of our swimming pools and develop carbon neutral community sports facilities.

This approach to investing in the health and wellbeing of our residents will serve Ipswich for several decades to come and we are proud to be able to adopt this Strategy despite the economic and financial challenges that the country and the Council faces. This long-term investment will bear dividends for Ipswich and for Suffolk.

Our goals are to provide modern, low carbon swimming facilities in the Town Centre and modern, carbon neutral community-based sports facilities in the North and South of the borough. We will do this through:

- **A new low carbon Aquatics Centre on Portman Road / Princes Street**
- **A new super sports and athletics centre at Gainsborough complemented by new pitches and clubhouse at Ravenswood**
- **New facilities at Whitton**
- **A lower carbon Fore Street Baths**
- **Supporting Fusion Lifestyle to renovate Broomhill Lido**
- **Continuing to operate Ransomes Sports Pavilion**



Bryony Rudkin

Deputy Leader and Portfolio
Holder for Sport

PUBLIC SWIMMING IN IPSWICH



We want our swimming pools to be places where you can learn to swim, improve your swimming skills, have fun, get fit, and compete.




Modern pools are also complemented by other fitness facilities such as gyms and exercise studios, cafes and soft play – enabling the pool to be a destination for all ages and abilities.

But we don't want our pools to damage the environment and so we're setting out to reduce the carbon footprint of our water spaces as well as to make them more modern and inviting.



Goal: To provide modern, low carbon swimming facilities in the Town Centre

BY 2030 OUR PUBLIC SWIMMING OFFER IN IPSWICH WILL BE:

-  A new low carbon Aquatics Centre on Portman Road / Princes Street
-  A lower carbon Fore Street Baths
-  A renovated Broomhill Lido operated by Fusion.

A new Aquatics Centre to replace Crown Pools



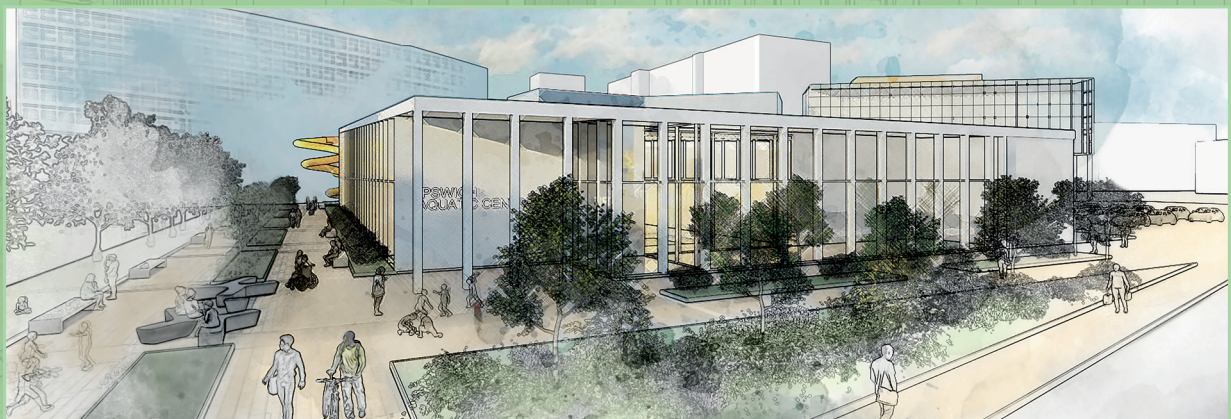
Crown Pools was opened in 1984 and was last refurbished about a decade ago. Its water facilities were “state of the art” in the 80s and have served the people of Ipswich well with most Ipswich children learning to swim there over the last four decades. In fact, we regularly have residents who learned to swim at Crown Pools as children returning with their own children or grandchildren. However, the facilities here are now old fashioned, inefficient, and cramped, with some accessibility issues and they limit our ability to meet demand for things like swimming lessons and gym stations.

We’ve therefore concluded that Crown Pools needs to be replaced. Following an extensive site search and options appraisal, we’ve identified part of the current surface car park on Portman Road as the most suitable for a new Aquatics Centre. This Centre would

include more water space including better leisure water, a much bigger gym, soft play, café and fitness suites.

The Aquatics Centre would be supported by the proposed Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) which has already received outline planning consent elsewhere on the current Portman Road car park. Both the Aquatics Centre and MSCP will need to work in harmony with other planned developments for this site, including along the Princes Street frontage and so we need to not only progress the detailed design and costings of a new Aquatics Centre here but also to “master plan” the whole development site to ensure all developments work in harmony and that the whole area is an attractive and safe place to visit.

We aim to open the new Aquatics Centre in 2027.



The future of Fore Street Baths

Fore Street Baths were built in 1894 and are held in Trust by Ipswich Borough Council to use as a public swimming facility. The Baths sit in a conservation area, in the heart of Alexandra Ward and were last refurbished in 2009. Offering six, 25-yard lanes, the pool provides valuable water space for the town, is much loved by its users (including schools and clubs) and is an Amateur Swimming Association affiliated training centre.

We intend to retain Fore Street Baths as part of our town centre swimming offer. We will, however, look at how we can improve the Baths' carbon footprint in order to support our carbon neutrality targets and to reduce its energy bills.



The future of Broomhill Lido

The Council also owns the freehold of the Broomhill Lido in St Margarets ward and we are committed to enabling its tenant, Fusion Lifestyle, to bring the Lido back into use by 2025 following a £1.5m funding commitment from the Council and a £3.5m National Lottery Heritage Fund grant.

It is expected that Fusion will open this facility in 2025.



COMMUNITY SPORTS FACILITIES




We want our community sports facilities to be modern, welcoming and accessible to all abilities; and to be carbon neutral. These facilities need to meet local community need as well as the needs of Ipswich's many sporting clubs.

Ipswich also has an opportunity to play an important part in regional sporting activity by enabling competitions and tournaments to take place in our facilities, thus promoting sporting excellence, enabling talent development and raising the aspirations of Ipswich's young people.



Goal: To provide modern, carbon neutral community-based sports facilities

BY 2030, OUR COMMUNITY SPORTS FACILITIES WILL BE:

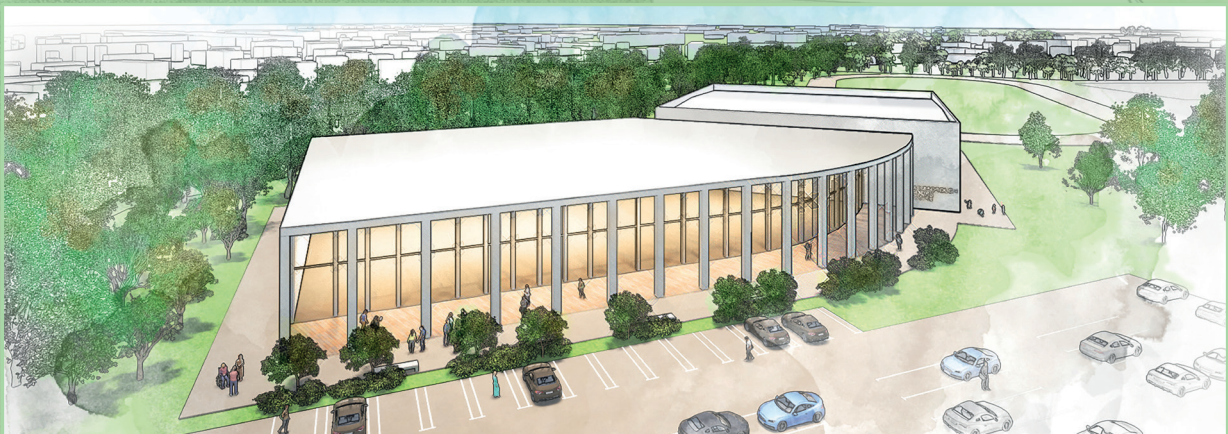
-  A new carbon neutral super sports and athletics centre at Gainsborough complemented by new pitches and clubhouse at Ravenswood
-  New carbon neutral facilities at Whitton
-  Continuing to operate Ransomes Sports Pavilion

A new super sports and athletics facility at Gainsborough

The current Gainsborough Sports Centre opened in 1984. In 1999 it was extended to accommodate a separate Gymnastics Centre operated by the Pipers Vale Gymnastics Club; in 2006 the Gymnastics Centre was extended again. The main Sports Centre has a 4-court sports hall, 25 station gym and a range of outdoor pitches. The building is tired and not meeting modern expectations; the Gymnastics Centre continues to have more demand than it can service in the current facility. We therefore intend to replace the current Sports and Gymnastics Centres with a new, modern, carbon neutral 8-court sports hall, larger gym, more exercise studios, new extended gymnastics provision, pitches and new 8-lane athletics track.



The introduction of an 8-court sports hall and 8-lane athletics track will be transformative. They will enable use for competitions that Ipswich cannot currently accommodate in its existing facilities. All the buildings will be designed to be carbon neutral making a significant contribution to the Council's carbon neutrality pledge. It is expected that the new facility will be open in Spring 2025.



The future of the Council's involvement in Northgate Sports Centre

The Council has long operated public access to this facility at Northgate High School; but the facility is owned by Suffolk County Council.

The facility requires significant updating and is being subsidised by Ipswich Borough Council. As part of this strategy, the Council will return the management of Northgate Sports Centre to Suffolk County Council and focus its resources on its current and proposed facilities at Gainsborough and Whitton.

The new Gainsborough and Whitton facilities will provide a significant upgrade to Ipswich's sporting offer compared to that currently available at Northgate.

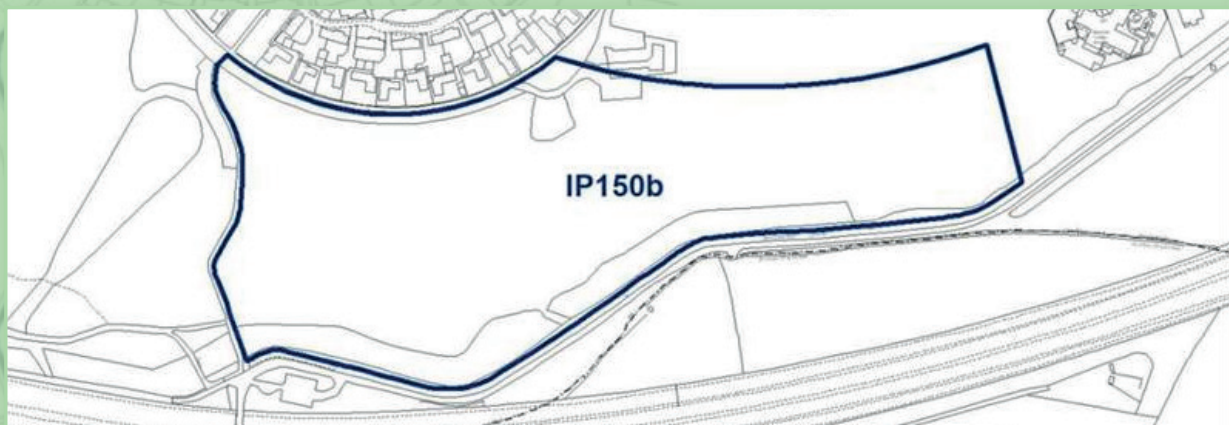


New Community Sports Facilities at Ravenswood

The recently adopted Local Plan includes an allocation of “sports land” in South Ravenswood and it is proposed to develop this into a range of pitches with club-house and parking.

These pitches would complement those at neighbouring Gainsborough and bring additional recreational and community facilities to Ravenswood.

The development would be subject to detailed design and a linked master planning process to ensure that there is cohesive development of all the remaining development plots in this part of Ravenswood. It is expected that the new facilities here would be open by 2026.



New Community Sports Facilities at Whitton

The current Whitton Sports Centre opened in 1983 and has the same design as Gainsborough with a 4-court sports hall, 25 station gym and a range of outdoor pitches and a cycle speedway track. The building is tired and not meeting modern expectations.

The Sports Centre land is just one part of the Council's land holdings in the Whitton area and so careful consideration needs to be given to where new sports facilities are built in this area. It may be that they would be better developed on a different piece of land.

We also need to take into consideration the development of new community sports facilities within the Ipswich Garden Suburb's schools to ensure that the whole area's needs are met.



Therefore before we finalise what sports facilities the Council will provide for the Whitton area, a "master planning" exercise is needed to determine the best use for each land holding.

This master planning will include public engagement and be completed in 2022 / 23 and once the outcomes are known, this Sports Facilities Strategy will be updated with the plans for the Whitton area. It is expected that new facilities in the Whitton area will be open no earlier than 2027.



Continued operation of Ransomes Sports Pavilion

The Ransomes Sports Pavilion opened in 2017 (replacing a dilapidated building) and provides a community and club house facility and also whether we should increase the facilities available on the site.

Over the next few years, we will review whether there are measures that can be taken to improve the carbon footprint of this facility.

