

**Q2. Please tell us why you agree or disagree with our overall approach. If you think there should be a different approach, please tell us here.**

Badminton England strongly opposes the proposal to close Kingsdown Sports Centre. Whilst recognising the challenges the Council is facing in terms of leisure provision, this proposal, if taken forward, will have a huge impact on the opportunities for hundreds of Bristol residents, young and old, to be physically active and lead a healthy lifestyle. The centre is a hugely popular venue for badminton, with activity levels that cannot be accommodated sufficiently in other leisure facilities.

The Centre is home to 30% of the affiliated badminton clubs across Bristol. These clubs (including Bristol & District Badminton Club, Beaufort, Bristol Swifts and University of Bristol) are some of the largest badminton clubs not only in Bristol, but across the South West. They each offer weekly participation and competitive opportunities for between 50 – 130 members and collectively provide opportunities for over 400 members to be physically active and positively impact their mental health. Kingsdown is a thriving Badminton hub which caters for all ages and abilities. This does not even take into account social badminton groups and individual court bookings, of which there are many at Kingsdown.

In terms of Badminton usage, these clubs offer badminton at Kingsdown for at least 16 hours per week. This grows to 22 hours a week if other forms of adult and junior community sessions are included. That equates to over 1,000 hours of opportunities for residents in Bristol to be physically active and lead healthy lifestyles. The wider impact of this on health costs and social value cannot be underestimated.

Our insight demonstrates the challenges residents in Bristol already face in accessing sport and physical activity, which would only further be exacerbated by the closure of Kingsdown. There is a significantly higher than average demand for badminton in the area, with unmet demand is predicted to grow by 2030, before the potential closure of five courts at Kingsdown is even considered.

Over 40% of the population in Bristol resides in the top 30% most deprived areas across the country and despite statements suggesting the area around Kingsdown is solely affluent, Cotham also contains a LSOA which is in the top 10% of the most deprived areas nationally and is the 21st most deprived area in Bristol. At a time when the Government, Sport England and other key local and national stakeholders are working to level up provision and tackle inequalities in opportunities to participate, this proposal undermines these efforts by putting more barriers in place for people to take part in physical activity.

It is referenced in the consultation that alternative provision is available through the University of Bristol Sports Centre, implying this venue has capacity to absorb the high demand caused by Kingsdown's potential closure. However, our experience shows this is not a viable option for alternative provision. From working closely to support local clubs and sessions, we are aware the general public are unable to access the University except occasionally outside term-time. The University's own Badminton club cannot, itself, find sufficient court time to train on campus due to increased demand for other indoor sports – it has to split training across several sites for this reason, including Kingsdown. It is misleading to suggest that current high levels of participation at Kingsdown can be accommodated elsewhere.

Specifically in relation to the Council's reasons for closing the facility:

- ***'Kingsdown Sports Centre is attracting few new users in a very competitive environment'*** – this is contrary to the actual picture of badminton activity at the site. As outlined above, the clubs

hosted at the centre are some of the largest and most established clubs in the South West and continue to regularly attract new members. Bristol Swifts itself has seen a huge increase in membership in the last few years and all the clubs continue to cater for residents that would not be regularly active if it were not for the opportunities that they provide.

- ***'Kingsdown Sports Centre is close to the University's Sports Centre'*** - as outlined above this is misleading because of the limited accessibility of this facility during term time and students themselves being unable to use it for all their activity suggests it is already at capacity.
  
- ***'Kingsdown Sports Centre does not have a swimming pool and requires an annual revenue subsidy'*** – this point requires further explanation given that the absence of a pool should increase the viability of the site and there are other facilities within the Council's portfolio that do not have a swimming pool and presumably also require an annual subsidy.
  
- ***'Due to its geographical location close to other leisure facilities, it contributes less towards the council's strategic outcomes for sport and physical activity'*** - it is clear from the evidence above that the site does contribute significantly to the strategic outcomes for sport. The stated proximity of other leisure facilities is misleading due to their lack of capacity. With an LSOA in the top 20% most deprived areas of the country and all ages catered for by the clubs hosted there, closure of Kingsdown will significantly reduce your ability to deliver across all four of the strategic outcomes outlined in the Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2020-2025.

To conclude, the impact of closing Kingsdown on opportunities for residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles, let alone the impact on badminton, will be huge with longer term impacts on social outcomes and social value inevitable. Alternative options for the large number of current users are not viable and hence this closure will result in hundreds of people, young and old, being unable to live healthy and active lifestyles, An inevitable consequence will be the loss of several large and long-established clubs, with a rich history of serving the residents of Bristol.

Should the proposal to close Kingsdown Sports Centre not be reversed, we would strongly encourage the Council to support and work closely with local community groups and residents to ensure the smooth transition of the facility into community ownership rather than close completely. Whilst the preference is for the Council to continue to ensure the future of the site, it is important for hundreds of residents that this hugely important facility is not lost completely and is able to continue to offer crucial opportunities to be active to young and old alike.

#### Q4. Please tell us why you think investment at each of these sites is important or not important

- **Investment option 1: Easton Leisure Centre**
  - We feel this is important and investment is required to improve the quality of site
  - A reduction from four badminton courts to three will exacerbate the issues linked to demand outlined above. It will also further increase the inequalities seen in accessing opportunities to be active with Easton being situated in IMD decile 1 and surrounded by LSOAs in the most deprived deciles. The ability of the site to

contribute to national and local strategies to tackle inequalities will be compromised.

- It is already a popular site for badminton activity, hosting lots of social badminton and one affiliated badminton club (Team Bristol Badminton Club) which caters for many players from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
  - A reduction in courts will negatively impact that four outcomes identified in Bristol's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2020-2025 and makes these considerably more difficult to achieve.
- **Investment option 2: Horfield Leisure Centre**
    - Given the proposed developments we believe the proposed funding will not make any difference to badminton provision at the site.
  - **Investment option 3: Bristol South Pool**
    - N/A