



East Devon  
District Council

## Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy Cranbrook

A report by Strategic Leisure Limited  
July 2025

## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction and Background</b>	<b>1</b>
	Housing and Infrastructure Development	2
<b>2.</b>	<b>Strategic context</b>	<b>4</b>
	Key Cranbrook documents/policies	4
	Demographics	7
	Population	8
	Identity	8
	Households	8
	Health	9
	Socio – Economic	9
	Deprivation	9
<b>3.</b>	<b>Future Facility Needs</b>	<b>10</b>
	Existing Indicative Facility Mix for a new Cranbrook Leisure Facility	10
	Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC)	10
	Facility Mix Options	11
<b>4.</b>	<b>Recommendations and Next Steps</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>Disclaimer</b>	<b>16</b>

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The East Devon Leisure Strategy, produced in June 2022, is supported by a Supply and Demand Audit which identifies the current and future facility needs to support an increase in population in the District through to 2040. This coincides with the end date of the Council's new Local Plan.
- 1.2. The Leisure Strategy highlights significant population growth to the western side of East Devon with the development of the new town of Cranbrook. Construction of the new town started in 2011 and will eventually deliver approximately 8,000 new homes for approximately 22,000 people. The East Devon District Council (EDDC) Local Plan, Cranbrook Plan and Cranbrook Town Centre Masterplan all refer to the infrastructure requirements to support the growing population. This includes a new leisure centre and health hub in the town centre.
- 1.3. At the time of writing the Leisure Strategy, EDDC had identified an indicative facility mix for a new leisure centre in Cranbrook, however no progress had been made in negotiating with developers and securing a preferred site for the facility in the town centre.
- 1.4. Since then, EDDC has negotiated the purchase of 1.5 hectares of town centre land which will form part of the Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone. An additional 2.6 hectares will be transferred from East Devon New Community Partners to Devon County Council, EDDC and Cranbrook Town Council. This will provide a total public sector holding of 4.1 hectares in Cranbrook and facilitate the delivery of essential infrastructure, business and employment opportunities within the town centre.
- 1.5. The new EDDC Local Plan has also allocated land to the east of Exeter, within the 'West End' of the District, for second new community of up to 10,000 homes. This new town will be approximately 4 miles from Cranbrook.
- 1.6. In response to the above existing and proposed housing development, this Addendum seeks to re-assess the facilities mix for the proposed Cranbrook Leisure Centre to ensure that current and future facility needs are met to support the increase in population.
- 1.7. The information contained in this Addendum will support the work currently being undertaken by a Project Team led by Price Consulting Ltd, and including architects, quantity surveyors and representatives from EDDC and Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL). The Project Team has been established to identify and explore all options for a new leisure centre in Cranbrook, develop a business plan, operating model and funding strategy, provide a clear approach for delivery of the scheme for each stage of the project, and consider management arrangements to operate and maintain the facility. This work will inform project delivery through to RIBA Stage 1.

## **Housing and Infrastructure Development**

- 1.8. To date, approximately 3,300 new homes have been built and occupied in Cranbrook. Two schools catering for more than 1,400 pupils have been completed and a railway station and neighbourhood centre together with a country park were completed in 2019. A town centre supermarket (Morrisons) opened in December 2024, and a children's nursery and high street shops are currently near completion. EDDC, Devon County Council and Cranbrook Town Council are now turning their attention to how the recently purchased 4.1 hectares of publicly owned land within the town centre can be best developed to meet the needs of the growing population of Cranbrook.
- 1.9. The Cranbrook Town Centre Masterplan sets out where the main uses will be allocated and the high-level principles that will inform the look and feel of the town centre. The Masterplan makes reference to the range of consultation that has taken place to help inform decisions around future use of town centre space. This has included consultation with key stakeholder organisations but also a community engagement exercise that was undertaken in late 2023 to understand residents' view on the future of the town centre. This community engagement exercise received 1,400 responses.
- 1.10. The top priority identified through the community engagement exercise is the development of a leisure centre with a swimming pool (1,100 responses). Other priorities include a Neighbourhood Health Centre with GP surgery, and a library. The community also expressed a desire for a diverse range of shops, eateries, a vibrant town square, public and green spaces, cultural venues and family and youth facilities. Given the town's young demographic, there is a need for spaces to cater for young people, offering both structured and unstructured activities.
- 1.11. The Cranbrook Town Centre Masterplan identifies a site for the Leisure Centre at the southern end of the town centre, north of Badger Way, close to Cranbrook Education Campus and the nursery. The site forms part of a parcel of land for which EDDC already owns the freehold. The site is relatively flat and has been cleared and levelled, ready for development. The site is large enough to accommodate the leisure facility mix as identified in the EDDC Leisure Strategy, with the exception of a 4-court sports hall, unless a stacked design is developed. A review of the proposed facility mix will be addressed as part of this report.
- 1.12. There is currently £5m indexed capital developer contributions secured towards the proposed leisure centre development.
- 1.13. Consideration is currently being given to locating a health and wellbeing centre adjacent to the proposed leisure centre. A campus-based approach rather than a fully integrated co-location is being taken forward. This is partly due to likely differences in timescales for the two projects but also the complication of asset management and funding streams for the proposed developments. NHS Devon has appointed its own architects and is currently progressing work on a business case for the Neighbourhood Health Centre in consultation with EDDC. It is anticipated that the Neighbourhood Health Centre will be funded from the Government's One Public Estate (OPE) programme.
- 1.14. Devon County Council is also exploring opportunities with EDDC and NHS Devon to include space either within the Neighbourhood Health Centre or leisure centre for a library, youth service and a family hub.

- 1.15. The above scheme supports the Sport England's [Community Leisure Hub](#) concept which promotes 'Active Design' and 'Active Environment' principles, providing access to affordable leisure and community facilities and services based on local community insight and need.

## 2. Strategic context

### Key Cranbrook documents/policies

- 2.1. Cranbrook lies to the north east of Exeter, approximately 2km to the east of the M5 motorway and north of the A30. The northern extent of Cranbrook is formed by the West of England railway line which serves Cranbrook railway station providing direct services to Exeter St David's and London Waterloo. Exeter Airport lies to the immediate south-west.
- 2.2. Proposals to build new housing on the former agricultural land was first referenced in the [EDDC Local Plan 1995 - 2011](#). Cranbrook commenced development in 2011 with first home occupations in 2012. Since its commencement, several phases of development have been completed, and subsequent phases are in the process of development with further additional phases in the process of reserved matters and detailed planning. More detailed reference to the development of Cranbrook is provided in the [EDDC Local Plan 2013 – 2031](#) including the provision of approximately 6,300 new homes by 2031 (subsequently revised to approximately 8,000 new homes), a town centre comprising a mix of retail, business and leisure development, the development of a railway station and bus links, the development of a country park, local play areas and green spaces, and the provision of a range of social, leisure, health, community and education facilities.
- 2.3. The phased and co-ordinated delivery of development in Cranbrook alongside the required infrastructure to support this development, is detailed in The [Cranbrook Plan 2013 - 2031](#), adopted in October 2022. The Cranbrook Plan talks about the importance of providing essential cultural, recreational and community infrastructure to meet the needs of this new community and provide a sense of 'Place'. It refers to the use of developer contributions to meet these infrastructure requirements and the provision of the following within the town centre:
- A – Neighbourhood Health Centre
  - Leisure Centre
  - Civic Centre (Town Council Offices)
  - Library
  - Children's centre
  - Youth Centre
  - Extra Care housing (minimum 55 beds)
- 2.4. The Cranbrook Plan highlights the importance of promoting and delivering community health and wellbeing and in 2015, Cranbrook became one of 10 developments chosen to be part of the 2015 [NHS England Healthy New Town Pilot Programme](#). This was the first time any part of the NHS had taken an active role in shaping the built environment to create healthier and connected communities with integrated and high-quality services. The legacy from being part of this programme was that, in 2018, Exeter and Cranbrook became one of 12 [Sport England's Local Delivery Pilot](#) programmes.



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## East Devon District Council

### *Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook*

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- 2.5. This programme adopted a whole system approach to identify better ways to address stubborn inequalities and break down barriers that prevent people from becoming and staying active and find solutions that increase activity levels that were replicable and sustainable. An integral part of this pilot programme was the Move More programme in Cranbrook that worked with partners to:
- Improve physical activity levels in Cranbrook, with a focus on families;
  - Improve health and wellbeing of residents in Cranbrook; and
  - Increase community connectivity, supporting residents to volunteer and community groups to develop.
- 2.6. Following completion of the Local Delivery Pilots in 2022, Sport England has continued to support and fund these communities as part of its new [Place Partnership](#) work. The Cranbrook Community Manager, Community Builder and Community Connector roles, appointed for the pilot programme, continue to support community groups within the town. They are based at the EX5 Alive Hub which is located at the Cranbrook Education Campus and help the community access and connect to services and opportunities to help them lead healthy and active lives. Their work has helped contribute to the outcomes identified in the [Cranbrook in Common – A Cultural Development Strategy 2016 – 2026](#).
- 2.7. The [EDDC Leisure Strategy 2021 – 2031](#) identifies the current and future built facility needs of East Devon’s population through to 2031. The Strategy’s Supply and Demand Audit evidences the need for a new leisure centre in Cranbrook. An indicative facility mix is included in the Strategy, details of which are provided in Section 3.1 of this report.
- 2.8. There are a number of other strategies including the **EDDC Cranbrook Enterprise Development Strategy (EDS)** 2015 and the community commissioned and driven ‘**Our Place**’ strategy 2015. Both strategies look at how the Council and community can work together to build a better and more economically viable Cranbrook. The EDS proposes setting up small business hubs/enterprise centre and supply of small low rent units for start-ups.
- 2.9. The [Emerging EDDC Local Plan 2020 – 2042](#) refers to EDDC’s longer term vision for the provision of a second new community of 10,000 new homes to the east of Exeter within the ‘West End’ of East Devon. The need to provide a second new community is due to the shortfall of acceptable sites to meet the districtwide housing requirement, particularly in relation to environmental constraints given that nearly 60% of the district is covered by National Landscape. Therefore, a new settlement is required to ensure that the districtwide housing requirement can be met in the most sustainable manner. A settlement of approximately 8,000 homes and supporting infrastructure would be established by 2042, with a longer-term vision for an additional 2,000 dwellings and associated land uses would be allocated in a future Local Plan.
- 2.10. One of the most recent documents produced is the [Cranbrook Town Centre Masterplan](#) (2024) which is in response to stakeholder insight and the 2023 community consultation, looking at facilities and services to be provided for in the town centre. It identifies an indicative location for the leisure centre at the southern end of the town centre, adjacent to Badger Way adjacent to the health and wellbeing Neighbourhood Health Centre on a land parcel TC4e.

East Devon District Council  
***Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook***

**Map 1:**

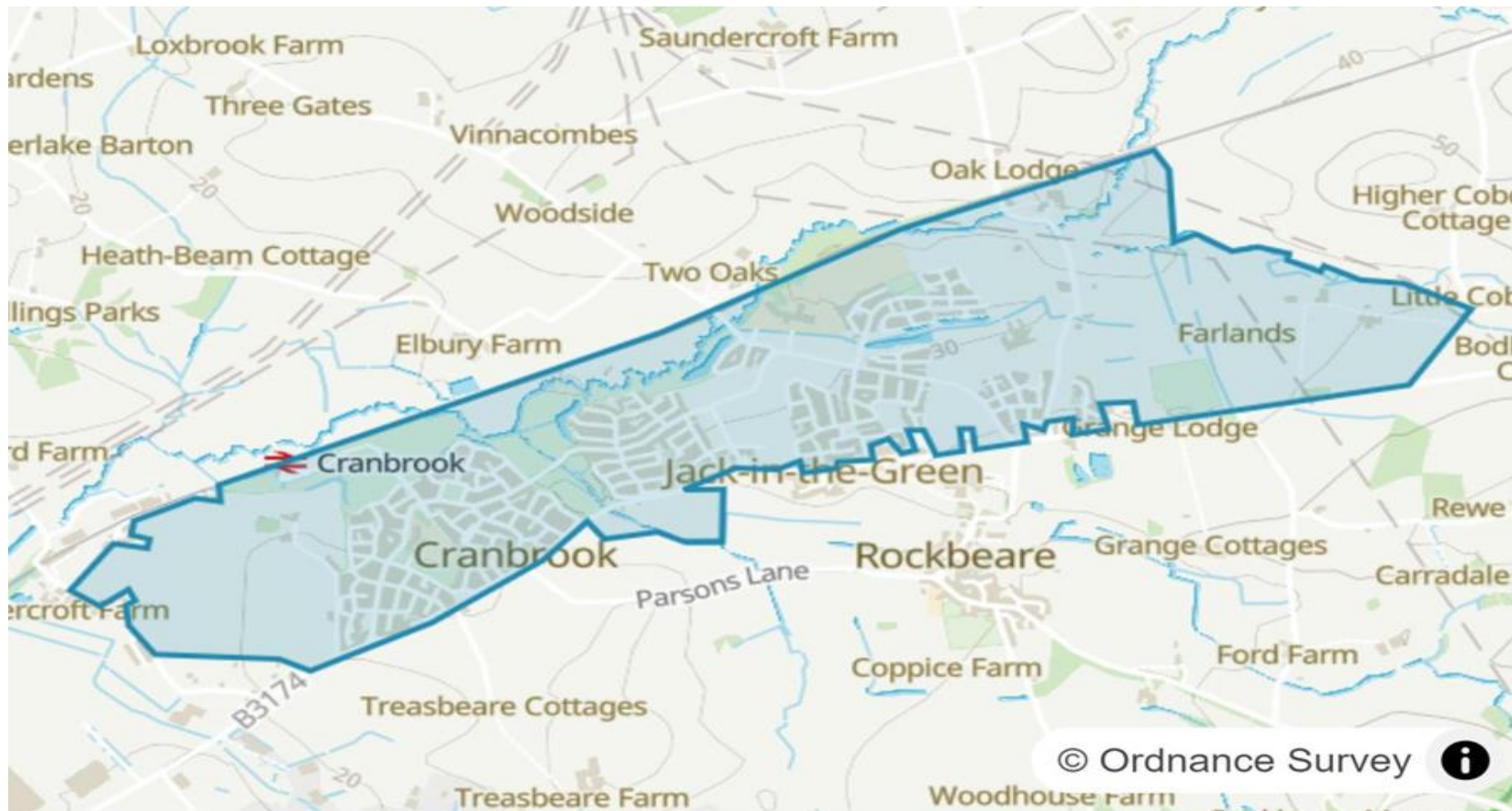




## Demographics

- 2.11. Appendix 1 to this Addendum, provides demographic data relating to Cranbrook as collated by Devon County Council's Public Health Intelligence Team in April 2025, incorporating data taken from the Census 2021. The key findings can be summarised as follows.

**Map 2: Cranbrook geographical area**



**Map source:** 2021 Census [Build a custom area profile - Census 2021, ONS](#)

## **Population**

- 2.12. The age profile in Cranbrook is particularly young, reflecting the typical demographic structure seen in new communities. There is a relatively large younger working age population (20 – 40 years) which corresponds to a larger child population. There is a large proportion of pre-school and primary school aged children and a smaller number of 14 – 21-year-olds.
- 2.13. There is an extremely small proportion (3.4%) of the Cranbrook population aged 65 years and over, compared with 25.6% for Devon as a whole, ranging from 17.4% in Exeter up to 42.1% in Seaton.
- 2.14. The Cranbrook population is projected to grow from 6,669 in 2021 up to 22,573 in 2039. Although the population age profile is projected to get slightly older over time, it is still expected to retain a very young demographic structure with those aged 65 years and over accounting for only 7.8% of the Cranbrook population by 2039.

## **Identity**

- 2.15. The 2021 Census highlights that the majority of residents are White British and born in the UK (95.5%) and a high proportion (60.1%) have no religious affiliation.

## **Households**

- 2.16. There are a high proportion of Cranbrook residents who have never married or registered a civil partnership (43.4%) compared to the England average (37.9%).
- 2.17. There are higher proportions of residents living in larger households of 3+ people with single family household dominating (77.5%).
- 2.18. There are a relatively high number of households that are not deprived in any dimension (64.9%), however 1 in 300 households is deprived in four dimensions which indicates dispersed deprived households.
- 2.19. There are a high proportion of residents living in a house/bungalow with 61.6% owning their property with a mortgage.
- 2.20. There is evidence of vulnerabilities around food poverty and indebtedness, partly reflecting housing costs and the high proportion of homes owned with a mortgage.

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## East Devon District Council

### *Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook*

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#### **Health**

- 2.21. Approximately 90% of residents identify as having good or very good health with a low number of residents registered as disabled. There are also lower levels of unpaid care. Very few homes lack central heating, which is indicative of any new housing development.
- 2.22. The prevalence of health conditions is typically lower than in Devon, reflecting the younger age profile of Cranbrook. There are lower levels of deprivation, obesity, hospital admissions, long term health conditions and mortality rates. There are lower levels of excess weight, similar levels of physical inactivity, and higher levels of smoking compared to East Devon, reflecting the age structure of Cranbrook.
- 2.23. There are higher levels of Asthma prevalence, emergency admissions for under-fives, hospital admissions for injuries in children and young people, general fertility rates, and smoking rates.
- 2.24. There are higher levels of absolute mental health need/service demand including the prevalence of conditions associated with younger age groups, particularly females (e.g. anxiety and eating disorders). There are also higher levels of self-harm including admissions and attendance.
- 2.25. Levels of child poverty in 2024 are significantly below (8.7%) the East Devon average (15.8%) and average for England (21.8%).

#### **Socio – Economic**

- 2.26. The majority of the workforce tend to work locally (Exeter area), travelling less than 10 miles to work and use a car as their main form of transport. The majority of households have 1 car with a high proportion owning 2 cars (42.1%).
- 2.27. There are higher levels of employment (81.3%) and a tendency towards full time employment. There are higher proportions of residents in associate professional and technical occupations, administrative and caring/service occupations. The majority are qualified up to A level (49.9%) or degree level (36.9%).

#### **Deprivation**

- 2.28. Cranbrook is typically below the national average in terms of the Census 2021 measures of deprivation across 4 domains (education, employment, health and housing), but there are higher levels around Younghayes Road and Tillhouse road. The overall proportion of households across the town with all 4 domains present (0.3%) is above the national average (0.2%) suggesting a pattern of dispersed high needs households across the town.
- 2.29. The latest available Indices of Deprivation are from 2019. The small areas used are based on the 2011 Census before building of Cranbrook commenced. Levels of deprivation for the areas previously occupying Cranbrook were below the national average.

### 3. Future Facility Needs

#### Existing Indicative Facility Mix for a new Cranbrook Leisure Facility

- 3.1. The EDDC Leisure Strategy 2021 – 2031 is supported by a Supply and Demand Audit which identifies current and future facility needs to support an increase in population in the District. The Supply and Demand Audit identifies the following:
- **Swimming Pools** – using the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) it identifies that by 2040 East Devon will have a shortfall of 489.4 sqm of water space; this is the equivalent of two 24m x 4 lane swimming pools. EDDC should consider the inclusion of a swimming pool (minimum 25m x 4 lanes) as part of the development of a new leisure centre in Cranbrook;
  - **Health and Fitness Suites** – there is a need to increase the number of fitness stations in the District; the audit identifies a current under supply of 101 fitness stations increasing to 253 fitness stations by 2040;
  - **Sports Halls** – existing levels of access to sports halls need to be maintained and increased where possible across school sites. EDDC should consider the provision of a new 4 court sports hall as part of the development of a new leisure centre at Cranbrook. Should a new leisure centre go ahead, EDDC should consider the future viability of the neighbouring sports hall at Broadclyst, given the age and poor condition of the facility.
  - **Studios** – there is a need to provide additional studios to cater for demand from a growing population.
- 3.2. The EDDC Leisure Strategy goes on to recommend the following indicative minimum facility mix for a new leisure centre at Cranbrook:
- 4 court sports hall;
  - 6 lane 25m swimming pool;
  - Community gym; and
  - 2 studios.

#### Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC)

- 3.3. The EDDC Leisure Strategy was written prior to EDDC's Emerging Local Plan proposals for the development of a second development of 10,000 new homes to the east of Exeter. Using a population multiplier of 2.35 persons per dwelling, this equates to a population increase of approximately 23,500.
- 3.4. The most recent population projections for Cranbrook as provided by Derbyshire County Council's Public Health Intelligence Team and using a population multiplier of 2.35 persons per dwelling, suggests that by 2039 Cranbrook will have a population of approximately 22,573.

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## East Devon District Council

### ***Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook***

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- 3.5. The Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) is used to help quantify the additional demand for key community facilities. It is designed to estimate the demand for sports facilities created by a new community as part of a residential development. The tool uses ONS 2018 Subnational Population Projections for the baseline population of a district/borough. The proposed new population is then added to this baseline figure to calculate the additional demand generated by the new population.
- 3.6. Appendix 2a and Appendix 2b show the additional demand for swimming pools, sports halls, artificial grass pitches, outdoor tennis courts and indoor bowls, brought about by Cranbrook population growth of 22,573 and an additional settlement population growth of 23,500. Given the close proximity of the two settlements, the following summarises the combined shortfall in provision:
- **Swimming Pools** – there is a combined shortfall of 463.73 sqm of water space. This equates to an 8 lane 25m swimming pool;
  - **Sports Halls** – there is a combined shortfall of 10.86 badminton courts. This equates to approximately 2x 5 court sports halls.
- 3.7. The SFC is just a tool and should not be looked at in isolation. Other factors should be taken into consideration including current access arrangements to existing equivalent facilities in the local authority and whether capacity could be improved; For example, there are a number of existing sports halls in East Devon, the majority of which are on school sites. The Leisure Strategy highlights the scope to improve access to these sites, which would reduce the requirement for further sports hall development in the district. Consideration should also be given to the proximity of equivalent facilities in neighbouring authorities, particularly where new housing developments are built close to local authority boundaries.

#### **Facility Mix Options**

- 3.8. Given the close proximity of Cranbrook to the proposed new housing development, it is important to take a wholistic approach to leisure facility mix requirements across the two settlements. It is also important to consider facility needs within the context of the demographic make-up and needs of Cranbrook and the likelihood that any new settlement will be likely to mirror a typical demographic structure of a new town i.e. younger age profile.
- 3.9. Consideration should also be given to opportunities that arise should Devon County Council co-locate a Library, Youth Services and Family Hub within the leisure centre footprint. This could include potential shared use of reception, café and meeting spaces e.g. evening use of meeting rooms for low impact exercise and health related activities, and sports club meetings etc.

#### **Cranbrook – Wet Facility Options**

- 3.10. In terms of swimming pool provision, it would be financially more cost effective for EDDC both in terms of capital and revenue, for one pool to serve both communities and that this pool should be located in Cranbrook. The Cranbrook community consultation exercise undertaken in 2023 highlighted the inclusion of a swimming pool as a priority for residents. Although the latest SFC suggests that an 8 lane 25m pool should be provided, it is clear that given the younger age profile of Cranbrook with its high proportion of young families with children, any water provision should cater for the needs of this younger demographic.



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## East Devon District Council

### ***Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook***

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- 3.11. There is therefore the option of providing a 6 lane 25m pool as recommended in the Leisure Strategy, but to also include a 13m x 7m learner pool to cater for Learn to Swim and family swimming. There is an option to replace the learner pool with a larger training pool (20m x 10m) with a moveable floor to provide greater flexibility in terms of swim programming and the ability to offer adult and club-based activities in the same space.
- 3.12. A new leisure centre in Cranbrook would essentially operate as a community facility. Although it would be advantageous to have fixed spectator seating (@120 seats) to allow for the future introduction of a new swimming club(s) and subsequent competitions on site, it is not seen as essential part of the core facility mix. Swim England has confirmed this. Space could be provided on pool side to accommodate temporary benches/seating during school swimming galas etc. Swim club competition could be catered for in neighbouring Exeter (e.g. St Sidwell's Point Leisure Centre) which is within close proximity to Cranbrook and the proposed new settlement.
- 3.13. Ancillary wet facilities should include a changing village with showers and toilets, group changing rooms for schools, disabled changing room, a cleaning store and pool storage. A first aid room on site that could serve both wetside and dryside facilities would also be advantageous.

#### **Cranbrook – Dry Facilities**

- 3.14. The Leisure Strategy identifies the need for a minimum of one 4 badminton court sports hall to serve the additional population. The latest SFC suggests a minimum of two 5 badminton court sports halls, but this does not take into account the relatively small used capacity of a number of existing sport halls in the district. Realistically, EDDC should look to provide a minimum of one new 4 badminton court sports hall to serve the two settlements.
- 3.15. The space allocated for a leisure centre in Cranbrook is not large enough to accommodate a 4-court sports hall, unless the proposed building is stacked, which will add to the capital cost. The Cranbrook Education Campus already has a 4-court sports hall which is available for hire by the local community and is identified in the Leisure Strategy as a site where there is scope to increase used capacity levels on this site.
- 3.16. One option would be to include a new 4 court sports hall as part of a secondary school build serving the proposed new 10,000 homes development. Given that a sports hall on a school site would only be accessible to the community evenings, weekends and holidays, consideration should be given to provision of a supplementary multi-purpose hall (equivalent of 2 badminton courts) as part of any new leisure facility build for the proposed second new community.
- 3.17. A minimum 101 station gym should be included within the facility mix for the new Cranbrook Leisure Centre to meet the current shortfall in fitness station provision as identified in the Leisure Strategy. As a minimum, an equivalent size gym should be considered for the proposed second new community since the shortfall in fitness provision is estimated to reach 253 stations by 2040.

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## East Devon District Council

### ***Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook***

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- 3.18. A minimum of 2 studios (or 1 large studio with a moveable divide) should be included within the facility mix for the new Cranbrook Leisure Centre. This will offer flexibility in programming and allow different classes to run concurrently, particularly during peak hours. Ideally a separate spin studio would also be provided of 100sqm in size to accommodate 20 persons; this would allow back-to-back virtual, and instructor led classes to take place throughout the day, negating the need for a separate store for the bikes and reducing the amount of operational downtime and staff resources in moving the bikes in and out of storage. A spin studio would also improve the financial viability of the site.
- 3.19. Ancillary dry facilities would include a studio store, male and female dry changing rooms, Changing Places room, public and accessible toilets.
- 3.20. Optional dry facilities which would improve the financial viability of the site and support Cranbrook's young demographic include the provision of soft play, a party room, and café/server. The café should ideally be located adjacent to both the soft play and learner pool viewing area and include a toilet and baby change facilities. This allows parents to take advantage of refreshment facilities whilst allowing continued supervision of their child(ren). A buggy store off reception would also be advantageous for those parents with children using the swimming pool, particularly with the young family demographic in Cranbrook.
- 3.21. An alternative option to soft play is Clip 'n' Climb which caters for toddlers, teenagers, adults, families and groups. This offers a range of fun and challenging climbing activities and often sits alongside and compliments a soft play facility.

## 4. Recommendations and Next Steps

- 4.1. This report has reassessed the core facility mix for a new Cranbrook Leisure Centre, taking into consideration the town's key demographics and the potential development of a second housing development of 10,000 dwellings in close proximity to Cranbrook. This report recommends that the following core facility mix be considered for a new leisure centre in Cranbrook.

**Table 1: Core Facility Mix for Cranbrook Leisure Centre**

Cranbrook Leisure Centre Core Facility Mix	
Facility Type	Size/Details
Main Pool	25m x 6 lane
Learner Pool	13m x 7m
First Aid Room	Ideally dual aspect, serving wetside and dryside
Fitness Suite	101 fitness stations (4.5 sqm/station)
Exercise Studio 1	130 sqm (22-person capacity)
Exercise Studio 2	130 sqm (22-person capacity)
Studio store	30 sqm
Changing Village	Including showers and toilets
Group Change x2	For schools
Pool Storage	Minimum 10% of water area
Cleaners store on poolside	

- 4.2. The following optional facilities should be given consideration, subject to available space, capital funding and supporting business case:

**Table 2: Optional Facilities for Cranbrook Leisure Centre**

Cranbrook Leisure Centre – Optional Facilities	
Facility Type	Size/Details
Spectator seating on poolside	120 sqm

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East Devon District Council  
***Addendum to East Devon Leisure Strategy – Cranbrook***

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Cranbrook Leisure Centre – Optional Facilities	
Facility Type	Size/Details
Spin Studio	100 sqm (20 persons)
Cafe	100 sqm (50 covers)
Soft Play	Including WC/baby change
Clip 'n' Climb	
Party Room	

- 4.3. Should EDDC proceed with a second housing development, consideration should be given to the provision of a minimum 4 court sports hall, 2 studios and a 100-station gym as part of the leisure infrastructure requirements for this community.
- 4.4. It is anticipated that this Addendum will inform the work currently undertaken by the Cranbrook Leisure multi-discipline Project Team as they develop a Cranbrook Leisure Centre scheme through to RIBA Stage 1 and beyond.

## Disclaimer

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