

Clissold leisure  
centre public  
consultation report  
construction essay



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Hackney Council has been consulting the users of Clissold Leisure Centre and its neighbouring communities about their experiences of using the centre when it was open, and how they feel it could be improved on reopening.

There was a very good response to the consultation, with more than 60 members of the public attending a consultation event on 22nd January and taking part in workshops to feed in their experiences and ideas.

Approximately 50 other people contributed at other meetings. A further 93 people took part in the consultation by sending the Council detailed comments by e-mail, by letter or by filling in the consultation forms featured in Hackney Today in February.

Further to this, the Council has held consultation meetings with members of the Charedi Orthodox Jewish community, Muslim groups (arranged by Faith in the Future) and Disability Hackney. The Council also invited Age Concern Hackney and the Stoke Newington Young People's Forum to take part in the consultation. The consultation has been publicised through the monthly Clissold news update, hand delivered letters to every household in Clissold, Lordship and Stoke Newington wards, on the Council's website, in Hackney Today and through news releases to local and ethnic press.

The works to the centre will be divided into two categories. The first, is the remedial works that have been identified from the assessment of defects at the Centre and have been costed at £5. 1m. The public consultation has made it clear that further improvements could be necessary, such as the redesign of the changing rooms, which are not essential for the reopening of the centre but would improve the way it works for local people and these are the second category of works. These works will have to be separately costed

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and funds allocated if appropriate. Both remedial and improvement works are focused on long term fixes for a fit for purpose centre. It is the Council's intention to carry out both remedial and improvement works simultaneously, and ensure that the need for prioritised improvements is balanced against the need to reopen the centre quickly.

This report is a summary of the main points made by local people during the consultation and of what the Council intends to do to address these issues. The report does not cover every comment that was made but seeks to draw out the dominant issues and respond to them.

## **1. DESIGN**

### a) Heating, ventilation and moisture:

What you told us: Many of the problems described by centre users referred to poor heating and ventilation, problems with air conditioning, water temperature and water leakages.

What we will do: One of the main features of the remedial works programme is to tackle these issues which affected the gym, dry areas, poolside, changing rooms and other areas of the building. Their rectification will ensure that the building is fit for purpose and comfortable to use.

### b) Changing rooms:

What you told us: The majority of people who responded to the consultation had complaints about the changing rooms. The general view was that the cubicles were too small, there were not enough facilities for family changing,

the lockers were inconveniently located and insecure and that the fixtures and fittings were cheap, shoddy and insufficiently durable for sustained public usage. There were also several comments about lack of basic fittings such as hooks for clothes and towels. The floors in the changing room were very slippery but this may be maintenance rather than a design issue. There were many complaints about the showers which were considered to be shoddy and unreliable, often not working, or without hot or cold water. The changing rooms in both the pool and gym were poorly heated. The location of the lockers above changing benches was inconvenient for some users, and some felt that the lockers were insecure.

What we will do: The replacement of the shower heads and fittings will be carried out as part of the remedial works. The shower system is being rectified so that the showers will work reliably and at consistent temperatures. There will be a review of all fixtures and fittings in the changing rooms and those that need it will be replaced with high quality alternatives. More hooks for clothes and towels will be provided where needed. The remedial works will address the heating problems in the building which will mean the changing rooms will be properly heated.

Given the number of comments about the layout of the changing rooms, the Council has decided to commission a redesign project which will progress with the involvement of the centre's user group. A major redesign of the changing room area will be separately costed as it will not be part of the main remedial works. Replacement or relocation of lockers will also be costed. Users will be consulted on the possibility of introducing a small

charge for locker use (e. g. 20p) to help fund the continuous improvement of the changing areas.

c) Layout:

What you told us: The majority of issues raised about layout concerned the area around the training and toddler pools, particularly with regard to child safety and hygiene. There were also several concerns expressed about the practicality of the flume and Jacuzzi arrangement. There was a strong feeling expressed by several people that the flume should be removed. Some people also felt that the glass walls and open plan design led to a lack of privacy which made them feel exposed. The reception area was felt to be badly laid out, with poor security allowing unauthorised access to facilities.

What we will do: The flume will be removed and a design review conducted of the area round the toddler pool, in consultation with the user group to ensure best use of space, whilst protecting the need to provide adequate space for swimming competitions. There were also issues raised about layout by the Clissold Swimming Club and the Council will be working closely with the swimming club and the Amateur Swimming Association to meet these specific needs. For more detail on child safety issues see section (1. d) below. Issues around privacy have been addressed through the Council's work with faith groups (see section (4. a)). The lay out of the reception area will be reviewed in consultation with the user group and management contractors and any necessary modifications costed. Security arrangements will be improved to prevent unauthorised access to the centre.

d) Child and family issues:

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What you told us: The N16 area of Hackney has a very high proportion of parents with young children. Much of the feedback from the consultation focused on areas where parents felt that the centre was either unsafe for young children in its design or not family friendly in its operation. Elements of the design of the building, such as sharp edges on concrete steps, lack of child safety seals on doors and sharp edges in changing rooms were a source of concern to parents, as was the layout around the training and toddler pools (see above). Many parents expressed their wish that if the flume could not be fully operational, it should be removed, as it only served to frustrate children when they couldn't use it. Parents also highlighted the lack of seating by the training pool for adults to sit and watch their children's swimming lessons. Many parents felt that the water in the toddler pool was too cold for very young children. The centre's policy to not allow buggies in the building was a problem for many parents, as was the shortage of nappy changing facilities. The lack of family sized cubicles in the changing rooms was also felt to be a problem for many users. The fact that the centre's crèche was not operational frustrated parents who wished to use the facility while they attended classes.

What we will do: Hackney Council will carry out a full child safety audit before works to the centre commence. A consultant from ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) and a health and safety officer from the Learning Trust will tour the building with the technical team and identify any potential child safety issues that may not have been picked up during the consultation. Risk areas such as sharp edges, dangerous doors etc will be rectified before the centre reopens. A buggy storage facility will be

introduced when the centre reopens and bench style seating will be introduced at the side of the training pool for parents to observe lessons, assuming health and safety restrictions allow it. Hygiene measures such as compulsory overshoes will be introduced for those wishing to use the poolside seating area. The temperature in the pools will be addressed through the main remedial works programme.

## **2. OPERATIONS**

### **a) Customer Service:**

What you told us: The feedback given by members of the public made it clear that users were not experiencing a satisfactory level of customer service. Most of the comments were about poorly trained staff, long queues at reception, problems booking classes, centre not opening on time, low staffing levels, poor monitoring of facilities, lack of information and inaccurate information and poor signage. It was also felt that there was misuse of facilities. For example, people who had not paid to use the saunas were getting in without being stopped and furthermore, there was an anti-social behaviour, such as eating and shaving in the health suite, something that was not being challenged by the management.

There were also comments about poor cleanliness and hygiene in many areas of the centre, including swimming and changing areas and squash courts. It was felt that maintenance of all areas was poor and that the lines of accountability between the Council and the operating company were unclear in this area. There was a great deal of positive feedback about the quality of swimming lessons and exercise classes.

What we will do: The Council is currently under contract to Leisure Connection to run all of its Leisure Centres for the balance of its 15 year contract, which started in February 2002. The Council and Leisure Connection jointly recognise the need to respond to these issues in order to ensure there is an improved service not only at Clissold but at all of Hackney's Leisure Centres. More rigorous contract management and performance monitoring has already been put in place at the other leisure centres, and will be put in place with a revised cleaning regime at Clissold, with a full deep clean to take place prior to reopening. Clearer lines of accountability will be established to ensure that the contractor is fully aware of and meets its maintenance responsibilities. Regular inspections will take place as well. We will develop a full staff training programme prior to reopening and customer service standards will be developed including telephone answering times and waiting times. These will be drawn up and monitored in partnership with the centre's user group which will play a key role in monitoring the contractor's performance on all operational issues. New information leaflets will be produced and kept regularly up to date, with information available in community languages and large print. Signage will also be improved in consultation with the user group.

b) Membership and pricing:

What you told us: The consultation feedback contained many interesting and useful suggestions about how membership and pricing should be structured to widen access to the centre. It also revealed that there was very little useful information available about membership and joining fees. Users were also frustrated by the fact that membership was limited to one centre and <https://assignbuster.com/clissold-leisure-centre-public-consultation-report-construction-essay/>



they could not get borough-wide membership. There were several comments about affordability of membership and swimming lessons, and complaints that even full members often had to pay extra for some classes. It was felt that concessions should be introduced for those on benefits or low incomes and that family tickets should be available for those wishing to bring children. Several respondents suggested free or subsidised use for pensioners and discounts for older children/teenagers. There was also a great deal of support for a 'swim-only' membership that did not have to include the more expensive gym facilities and the idea of one day tickets that included all facilities.

What we will do: The Council has commissioned a review of pricing and membership at all its leisure facilities. This is expected to include options to introduce saver and family tickets, a revised borough-wide Leisure Card and a full review of programming across the borough. Negotiations with Leisure Connection are underway to improve the options for membership and ticketing at Clissold. The pricing and membership review is expected to report back in the autumn when there will be opportunities for public consultation and work with user groups. The Council intends to have an improved pricing and membership structure in place when Clissold reopens.

#### c) Parking and cycling:

What you told us: Many people expressed concerns about the lack of parking facilities at the centre. This presented specific problems for disabled users, large groups using mini bus transport and users who find public transport difficult, for example members of the Charedi community who often have

very large families. The Council was asked if it would be possible to arrange parking at Stoke Newington School, as had been suggested when the centre originally opened. Several respondents told us that there were insufficient cycle racks and a high level of cycle thefts.

What we will do: An initial meeting has already taken place with the headteacher of Stoke Newington School who has expressed his willingness to work with the Council to find a parking solution for Clissold Leisure Centre by allowing use of the school car park outside school hours. The Council will continue to work with the school to ensure that an arrangement can be reached by the time the centre reopens next year. At the same time, the Council will ask the London Cycling Campaign to review facilities for cyclists at the centre.

d) User group:

What you told us: There has been a great deal of interest from people wishing to be part of a User Group at the Leisure Centre to oversee its operation. During the consultation, more than 30 people expressed interest in being part of this group.

What we will do: The Council intends to constitute the group for its first meeting in May 2005, following the commencement of works to the centre. Given the high level of interest in membership of the group, it may be necessary for a nomination and election process to take place, in order to keep the group to a manageable size. It is proposed that the group should include representatives of the following groups:

- Swimming pool users
  
- Gym/health suite users
  
- Sports hall/dry side users
  
- Parents and young children
  
- Charedi Orthodox Jews
  
- Muslim communities
  
- Disabled users
  
- Stoke Newington group
  
- Young people (probably SNS school council)
  
- Older people

The User Group will play a major role in developing programming and monitoring management arrangements. When the User Group is constituted it will be asked to elect a representative to sit on a new borough wide strategic leisure centre user group, which will also include representatives from the user groups of other Hackney centres, the local Primary Care Trust, the Learning Trust and other partners.

### **3. GYM, DRY FACILITIES AND SPORTS HALL**

What you told us: Comments about these facilities often reflected wider customer service issues, such as an unreliable booking system for badminton and nets not being put out at the start of session. The time-consuming and

repetitive booking system for classes was also a problem for many users. Gym users expressed a feeling that there was a lack of fitness expertise amongst the staff, who were mainly very young and that they felt unsupported in using the equipment. It was felt that fitness experts should be on hand, both for health and safety reasons, and for assisting users in improving their fitness. Other issues arose from design related problems, such as the poor ventilation in the exercise rooms to the overheating in the gym, water leakages into the sports hall and crumbling plaster in the squash courts.

What we will do: Customer service issues relating to booking, programming, membership and staff training will be addressed in the wider review of these issues described in the sections on customer care and membership and pricing (see sections (2. a) and (2. b)). The user group will have a significant input into programming to ensure that it meets the needs of local communities and that booking systems are user friendly. The problems with ventilation, heating and water damage will all be resolved through the main programme of remedial works to the centre.

#### **4. ACCESSIBILITY**

The Council has endeavoured to include all sections of the community in its consultation on Clissold Leisure Centre, and wants to ensure that the centre is accessible to all those who want to use it. Before the centre reopens, all staff will be fully be given full equality and diversity training to ensure that they recognise and respond to the needs of all Hackney's communities.

a) Faith Groups:

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What you told us: Hackney's Charedi Jewish Community makes up a very substantial part of the population of N16 with more than 20, 000 community members living in the area. This community has experienced problems in using the centre due to the necessity for single-sex usage for both adults and children and the privacy problems caused by the open plan nature of the centre. Charedi community members cannot participate in or observe mixed-sex use of the centre but there is a very real desire in the community to use the centre, particularly to teach children to swim. Many Muslim users of the centre have similar needs around sex segregation and privacy.

What we will do: A tour of the centre has been arranged for a senior Rabbi, members of the Jewish Health Organisation and Jewish swimming club organisers in so that they can explain the problems the community experienced in using the centre. The design team will, where possible, work up cost effective solutions to the problems, in consultation with the Charedi and Muslim communities, for implementation in time for the centre's reopening. Both faith communities will be invited to have a representative on the User Group to ensure that the centre's management and programme takes their needs into account.

#### b) Disability:

What you told us: The Council met with representatives of Disability Hackney to discuss the operation and design of the centre. Several concerns about disability access were raised specifically parking, handrails to aid entry and exit from the training pool, and problems using the disabled facilities in the changing rooms.

What we will do: Before building works commence, Hackney Council will arrange for a qualified Access Officer to visit the centre, with representatives of Disability Hackney and members of the technical design team to carry out an audit of facilities at the centre and identify what actions can be taken to improve access. For action on parking see section (2. c).

## **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Hackney Council extends its thanks to all members of the public who took part in this consultation and in particular Disability Hackney, Interlink, Faith in the Future and Clissold Swimming Club for their input. Thanks also to Stoke Newington School for allowing use of the school for consultation events.

## **6. FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS**

The Council will continue to produce monthly communications updates on the progress towards reopening the centre. If you do not already receive this and would like to do so, please call 020 8356 3323 or e-mail [Clissold@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:Clissold@hackney.gov.uk).

As the works to the building progress, the Council will produce photo updates of the interior of the building which will be published on the web and displayed outside the leisure centre site. The Council will work with local residents, schools and businesses to ensure that any disruption caused by the building works are minimised.

**Information was source by:**

- <http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/clissold-leisure-centre-was-choice-of-riba/181650>. article

**STUDY OF THE DESIGN TEAM****The Project**

The London Borough of Hackney approached Stephen Hodder to design them a leisure centre in 1996 as London Borough of Hackney would be the client and Stephen Hodder to become the principal architect. The new Leisure Centre was funded by London Borough of Hackney (£10 million), Lottery Funding Sports England, with Hackney Borough Council acting as the client. With many consultations this was then sent to planning which was approved on the 30th July 1997 for the erection of a New Leisure Centre.

The area of Hackney was in need of help, so the design of the Clissold Leisure Centre was the council's attempt to raise Hackneys reputation and community spirits and to embrace the new millennium. The design embodied a gleaming aluminium roof. The complexity of this design proved to be an anatomy for disaster with many issues untested or researched carefully.

It began with a budget of 7 million pounds which escalated to the cost of 32 million when the centre finally opened.

The Leisure centre opened in February 2002, but was later closed in November 2003 due to many problematic issues that the centre had.

Then, legal action was taken by London Borough of Hackney against the Architect, QS, Consulting Engineers and Contractors.

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There were many problems that could have been avoided at the design stage such as:

- The main problem was the roof, leaking almost across its whole span.
- The children's changing rooms were located next to the 2.00m deep end of the swimming pool.
- The changing village which catered for different religions, such as Jewish and Muslim visitors failed.
- Ventilation and air conditioning should have been design and calculated correctly.
- The correct type of shower drains should have been specified (as these blocked and allowing dirty water to flow on to the pool)
- Avoid taking the shear building tolerance to the maximum (creating many cracking issues)
- Not designing a complex roof which created a dramatic increase in building cost
- Swimming Pool design as this increased during construction.

A report in Building magazine as early as 1999 hinted at what was to follow, saying: "The main staircase, where stairs and landings are all cantilevered off, a slim 400mm-thick central wall is a key example of structure working at the edge of tolerance." This led to large cracks appearing all over the building.

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In December 2004, the 'Clissold Scrunity Review Panel' aimed to help re-open the Clissold centre efficiently and keeping the community in the loop. The reported all the problems with the centrtre and they concluded that the London Borough of Hackney had to continue to communicate with Stoke Newington populace regarding the Clissold Leisure Centre. The had to regularly post items on the councils website and produce monthly newsletters. The stated that public engineering and architectural information relating to the faults should we made public via the councils website. There was no direct mention of the architects duties.

### **Stephen Hodder – Architect**

Stephen Hodder has been in practice since 1983.

In 1992, Hodder Associates was formed and won the Royal Fine Art Commission/Sunday Times Building of the Year Award for Colne Swimming pool in Lancashire later that year.

He was afterwards selected as one of six architects to represent the emerging generation of British Architects in an exhibition at the Architectural Institute of Japan in Tokyo and at the Biennale at Sao Paulo in Brazil.

In 1995 the practice was awarded the Grand Prize at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, for the panels presented as part of the submission for the Manchester City Art Gallery Competition.

In 1996 it received the RIBA/Sunday Times Building of the Year Award and the inaugural Stirling Prize for the Centenary Building, University of Salford.

He was awarded Honorary Degree from Manchester Metropolitan University.

He is one of a group of world class designers who have helped Manchester enter the premier league of architectural cities in Europe.

He was awarded the title Doctor of Arts at a degree ceremony for the Faculty of Art and Design at Bridgewater Hall, Manchester.

Professor David Dernie, Head of Manchester School of Architecture, said: “ Stephen Hodder is one of the country’s foremost architects and MSA is recognising him for his contribution to architecture locally, nationally and internationally and his work with the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Manchester Society of Architecture and the Center for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).”

A winner of the RIBA/Sunday Times ‘ Building of the Year Award’ (1996) which is the most important award in British architecture for a single building. His Centenary Building at the University of Salford is described as “ a fusion of design and technology”.

Hodder Associates has now won 25 awards, most recently the Roses grand Prix Award and the RIBA Award for Berners Pool, Grange-over-Sands.

Other work: a stunning extension to St Catherine’s College, Oxford / the Corporation Street Footbridge built after the 1996 IRA bomb / the National Wildflower Centre, Knowsley.

Professionally he has been president of the Manchester Society of Architects

RIBA North West Chairman

Member of the CABE design review panel.

Awarded with an MBE for services to architecture in 1998.

He left the Building design partnership by the mid 90's and created his own practice in Manchester.

In the same year he won the Stirling prize for his 400 student faculty in Salford and invited 2 councillors to the ceremony who had recently asked him to design the Clissold park leisure centre. During the design of the project he opened his new office in Greta Portland street. He admits there were faults with the design process that were unreported at the time and he was receiving positive press at the time off the back of his Stirling award he had already won. He openly admits that one of the key lessons he has learned is that " I should have been stronger instead of telling people what they wanted to hear and stopped the project for three or four months and done some market testing. I should have taken a more robust line. Now I'll say if I'm concerned about whether I can deliver a project."

Hodder had agreed a lump sum fee and was paying for salaries and overheads during the delay. He lost over a quarter of a million pounds and for 18 months was working for nothing.

He feels that the claims made about him were personal in some news papers by people he had not dealt with during the construction of the project and had no knowledge of his professionalism.

In 2002 Hodder close his London office and when two associates working on the Clissold park leisure centre left to open there own practice. Worse, still at the end of 2002, the mounting stress took its toll on his marriage and subsequently split from his wife.

Other projects by Stephen Hodder include: L'Homme, mens shop, Manchester, 1986 / Colne Swimming Pool, Lancashire, 1991

wich is the building that really launched Stephen Hodder into the mainstream architectural press, though the later University of Salford building was the one that established the practice's reputation and won some significant awards.

### **The Design Team's working method**

Stephen Hodder encountered problems early on in the project with the vast changes in the council's personnel, with the chief executive leaving and the council's in house project manager was changed. The council had poor management and no proper management control, which created a lack of continuity with the project. This in turn caused problems of communication between the client and the architect. With the project being rushed by the clients due to VAT reasons, opened up serious problems to get the project complete.

Stephen Hodder then opened up a new practice in Great Portland Street, London which would deal with the Clissold Leisure Centre. Out of 21 staff, he had appointed 6 staff to work on the Clissold Leisure Centre alone. But during the problems of the project, two of the main architects who were

overseeing the project, left to set up their own practice whilst all the  
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problems had not been fully dealt with. This in turn created the London office to then be closed.

Stephen Hodder had to take the project over to ensure it was completed. It began with communication between the architect and the council/public meetings, at the start of the project; to becoming between the architect and the council/public meetings/Sports England.

With all the increased investments from other parties such as Sports England creating more issues as more people began voicing their opinion and the architect to follow through with their views and not his.

The architect should have taken more control upon the project, which he admitted and regrets, a dictatorship approach probably would have saved the project. The design being too complicated and not tested also played a major role, in which the architect wished he allowed more time to test the design more vigorously.

Many items were mentioned in previous meetings but never applied to the design such as orthodox changing rooms etc, so whether the architects were at the meeting or not, which could have affected the final design.

In the eyes of the public and council, it failed dramatically. This is due to many reasons, but communication and dictatorship was the significant cause, if this was stronger the project could have been more successful.

## Judgements

Our initial judgments are that the design team failed, with two of the main architects working on the project leaving mid stream. The fact that Stephen Hodder was the main architect on the project, his minor input, and control over the whole project created issues and when he took the project completely over, it was too late to prevent the problems. Dictatorship would have been the key for the success of the project, as he would have strong input and leadership to control the key players overlooking the project.

In the eyes of the public and council, it failed dramatically.

It was quite shocking that the minor input that Stephen Hodder had upon the project cost him the London practice and £250, 000 of his own money, even though when he took the project over, he spent 18 months of unpaid work to salvage the centre from disaster.

Ensuring a strong communication is held between all members of the project, from client to architects to contractors, with every meeting, ensuring the points mentioned are followed through. These weren't done, the council created major issues with this as their poor management and change in personnel affected the communication between both parties.

Many items were mentioned in previous meetings but never applied to the final design such as orthodox changing rooms just to name a few which had shown the public displeasure and anguish.

There must have been poor communication between Stephen Hodder and his staff who were dealing with the project at h