

Morden Leisure Centre

Welcome to the sixth Morden Park Leisure Centre newsletter, keeping you fully informed about the exciting new leisure project being delivered by Merton Council.

Further updates can be found at: www.merton.gov.uk/leisureformorden

PLANNING APPROVAL GAINED

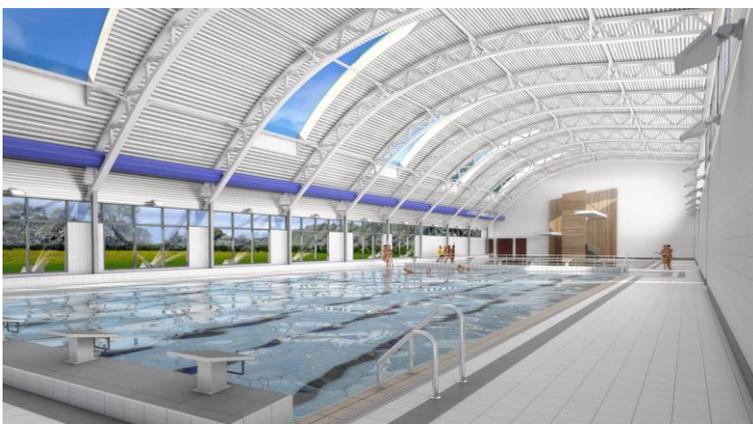
Following the planning approval the project team have been working to meet the planning conditions so that they can be discharged. This has included further studies and work around the site. Users of the park will have come across these activities over recent months, more detail on some of these activities is included later in this newsletter.

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR APPOINTED

Following the appointment of Pellikaan Construction Ltd the council has entered into a Pre-Construction Agreement with them and simultaneously has been working with their designers and engineers to produce the final leisure centre package within the budget available. That work is now coming to an end and the contractors will shortly be finalising all the detail in advance of entering into a construction contract with the Council. This has all taken longer than originally intended, but it is important that the facility is the best that can be afforded.

The Council's appointed architects and mechanical & electrical engineers are now transferred to the contractor to ensure that all work in the design phases is carried through into the final building project.

An actual start date for the contractors to take over the site is still to be determined, but you will see further enabling works taking place within the park in the weeks' ahead.



ECOLOGY MATTERS – GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

The presence of Great Crested Newts (GCNs) in one of the ponds in Morden Park has meant that the Council has needed to engage the specialist services of an ecologist, licensed to work with this protected species. We have carried out a Pre-Screening Assessment with Natural England and gained an EU Licence for protected species.

Following the licence award, we commenced works on Pond 2. This pond does not have GCNs, but under the licence we are required to improve both the existing habitat (Pond 1) and this neighbouring pond, encouraging the potential for a greater population of GCNs in years to come.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Stephen Alambritis, joined the workers to do his part in improving the environment for our protected wild-life. The Leader said ...

“It is very exciting that we have a new affordable leisure centre coming to Morden and it’s great to see the preparatory work well under way. It’s important we ensure the wellbeing of our precious wild-life.

We are getting a good deal for the Great Crested Newts and we’ve secured a great deal for our residents that will provide them with a modern leisure centre for families and clubs to enjoy.

The new centre will cost us less to maintain in the long run than the current building, so it’s good news for council tax payers and good news for the newts”

Pond 1 works followed with greater depth being put into the pond, the banks cleared and some trees removed, all under the watchful eye of our expert ecologists. Finally, a new fence was put in place to provide added newt protection.

To ensure that the community also had the opportunity to learn about the newts, Gareth Matthes, the Council’s specialist ecologist, attended the Morden Park Playing Fields Association Annual General Meeting and gave a very informative talk about GCNs. Gareth will follow up this work later in the project with the community so that they can engage with our Greenspaces officers in keeping this area maintained in the best interest of the Newts.

As construction gets closer to starting on site the contractors will be working with Gareth to ensure we comply with our EU Licence.

ECOLOGY MATTERS – HEDGEROW AND TREES

The planning approval included the removal of part of the hedgerow and some trees in the fence line along the Morden Park access road to the main car park. In order to comply with the EU Licence and protect the GCNs, as well as recognising that the birds would start nesting in the spring, we removed the hedgerow and trees in October.

SITE SURVEYS

A range of surveys have been carried out over recent months to provide key information to support all the specialist work needed to bring the design and specifications forward for the construction phase.

- Archaeological surveys – undertaken by the Museum of London Archives, these have included trial pits on the site – nothing was found
- Ground conditions – desk top research and on site investigations including installation of a standpipe to measure water levels
- Drainage surveys – looking at the drainage runs into Pond 1
- Silt testing – to make sure that the silt in the ponds was ecologically safe to be removed and spread in the pond surrounds to enhance and improve the local habitats – it was all safe to move
- Standing Building Survey – we have commissioned the Museum of London Archives to carry out a standing building survey on the existing Morden Park Pools in 2017

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Project team representatives have met with a number of local people through open forums and organised meetings. These include Morden Park Playing Fields Community Trust (MPPFCT); Morden Area Forum; Morden Park Playing Fields Association (MPPFA); Merton Park Residents Association and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL).

We have provided updates and answered questions that were known at the time, this newsletter will bring all our community up to date on the project.

Pond 2 - Works Underway



MORDEN PARK PLAYING FIELDS COMMUNITY TRUST

The Council continues to support and work with Morden Park Playing Fields Community Trust (MPPFCT) on their proposals to open up the Morden Park sports pitches to the community, along with a new pavilion building.

MPPFCT Trustees have set a fund-raising target of £25,000 to push ahead with their planning application and are currently working to raise those funds. If you wish to support their project please get in touch directly with the via the MPPFCT's secretary Ray Skinner - skinhicks@tiscali.co.uk

PRE-CONSTRUCTION ENABLING WORKS

As well as the work mentioned in this newsletter, we have also commissioned works to the drainage runs in the access road. This work will commence early in the New Year making the drains ready to be connected into during the construction period.

We advertised in the local newspaper the council's intention to lease a small parcel of Morden Park, within the confines of the Leisure Centre development. There were no objections to this and we are leasing the parcel of land to UK Power Networks (UKPN) for the purposes of providing a sub-station for the centre.

NEXT STEPS

- Finalising the design and costs
- Discharging pre-construction planning conditions
- Awarding construction contract
- Implementing pre-construction enabling works
- Commencing site set-up
- Commencing work on site
- Issuing next newsletter

Pond 1 – Works Underway

