

Case Study

# Elmbridge Xcel Leisure Complex



Delivered for DC Leisure

25m 8 lane pool, 20m learner pool, 120 station fitness suite, 12m high climbing wall | 2006



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GROUP



# Elbridge Xcel Leisure Complex



**Introduction** Willmott Dixon were procured under a partnership arrangement with DC Leisure for the construction of a new two storey leisure facility comprising internal pools, gym, bowling halls, changing facilities, climbing wall and squash courts with associated external landscaping and car parks. Works included the demolition of the existing leisure centre and remediation to the existing ground.

**Key Fact** The project was delivered as a PPP deal, in partnership with DC Leisure and Elbridge BC. The deal was closed within 5 months, making it one of the fastest PPP deals of its kind.

**Details** Our challenge was to achieve an economical design for new wet and dry leisure facilities on an existing dry leisure centre footprint, and deliver a building that the community could be proud of and would be able to enjoy long term. Energy-efficient and economical to run, design flexibility ensures, modern facilities that are adaptable to users' needs now and for the future - such as a learner pool with a movable height floor; squash courts with movable walls to make one long room; and a tongue and groove floor that can be placed on the surface of the indoor bowls hall to create a function room. The building also cleverly highlights the internal features so that they are highly visible externally, making it an eye-catching local landmark that attracts positive interest and enhances the local area.



A strong hands-on collaborative partnership between ourselves, the Council and our contract partner DC Leisure Management, plus consultation with stakeholder groups from the start gave vital impetus to the project all the way through - and even enabled a slight shift of the building design to accommodate a bat flight path.



**Fastest PPP deal to date** Once DC Leisure and Willmott Dixon became preferred bidder, the process to financial close continued. This is where the real partnership between the private sector and Council was critical. A number of different consultants and divisions were closely involved in the process, all needing careful co-ordination to achieve financial close. History shows that the average time to financial close of this kind of PPP deal is 18 months. Elbridge closed in 4 1/2 months, which clearly sets Willmott Dixon apart as a partner who can deliver. This timetable is very achievable and has set the leisure industry the challenge to close commercial deals quicker.



**Successes** Rationalising two facilities into one with greater commercial opportunity is saving the Council in the region of £400,000 a year, and the community has a fantastic public pay and play leisure centre with the quality and feel of a private club.

Participation has surpassed all expectations, and since the project was completed it has risen from 250,000 visits a year at the old facilities to 850,000 now, with membership doubling.

**Sustainable achievements** A key feature involved switching from the use of plasterboard to Fermacell dry lining boards, which are largely made from recyclable materials. Materials arising from demolition and construction activities were subject to environmental and waste management.

The demolition waste was subject to selective disposal, with the use of crusher plant recycling aggregate for use within external works and local projects.

**Testimonial** **Ian Burrows, Head of Leisure Services, Elbridge Borough Council**

"The new Elbridge Xcel Leisure Complex is a high standard and efficient state of the art leisure complex that the local community can take real pride in, and will undoubtedly attract interest as a regional or even international venue in years to come"

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