

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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MOVING INTO THE FINAL DEMOLITION PHASE OF CARNIVAL POOL AND FITNESS CENTRE

Demolition work on site of the former Carnival Pool and Fitness Centre moves into the final phase after Wokingham Borough Council took possession of the offices formerly known as Southgate House.

Works to demolish the offices on Wellington Road will start soon, which will make way for the multi-million pound complex featuring a new larger leisure centre and library. This is the final stage of the borough council's ambitious regeneration scheme in the town.

Insurance brokers BJP were based in Southgate House on Wellington Road and the borough council has helped them to stay in the town centre by relocating them to the newly refurbished Alexandra House offices in the Plaza. This has now been renamed Southgate House to help BJP with a smooth transition to the new site

Demolition work will be completed by the end of the summer, with construction work on the new complex starting in autumn 2020. The leisure facilities will be run by the borough council's partner Places Leisure.

The new complex will feature two swimming pools (a six-lane 25m pool and teaching pool with moveable depth floor and splash pad); a larger fitness suite and specialist group cycling studio; large studios; a four-court sports hall which can convert into a 400 seat performance venue; a spa, a health and wellbeing centre; larger café; and viewing areas. There will also be a large library including space for events and activities, a lending library, fun children's zone and space for exhibitions.

Wokingham Library will continue to be based in its current location in Denmark Street until the new complex is complete and ready to move into.

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The borough council has now submitted a planning application for minor design changes to the new complex, which will improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

In addition to rationalizing the internal layouts and introducing first floors into some areas that were previously shown as double height spaces, the updated designs also include new air source heat pumps and additional roof-mounted solar panels alongside other changes.

You can view the planning application on the borough council's website at: www.wokingham.gov.uk (search for planning applications, and use the planning application number: 201802). It is hoped the application will be considered by the planning committee in the autumn.

Although the footprint of the complex will reduce slightly from what was previously approved, the energy efficiency of the building will be significantly improved without compromising the leisure centre facilities. The footprint of the library remains the same.

Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor, executive member for regeneration, said: "These changes to the design of the new Carnival complex are being driven by our response to the climate emergency action plan. Our original designs were approved back in 2017 and, whilst the new building was energy efficient, we felt that more could be done. Taking the time to review the designs has allowed us to significantly improve performance across the site, with the centre now achieving a massive 117% carbon reduction above the government baseline target, compared to the original designs 13.2%.

"This supports our ambitions to reduce carbon emissions from the complex, as well as reducing our operating costs. We remain committed to providing fantastic facilities for all our residents to enjoy and this new multi-million centre is an important facility not only for sport and leisure but the library service too."

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

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