

Appendix 2 - Officer Response to Call-In

Carlton Active - RIBA Stage 2 Cabinet Decision (19 February 2026)

1. Purpose of this Appendix

1.1 This appendix provides the formal Officer response to the Call-In of the Cabinet decision dated 19 February 2026 relating to the Carlton Active RIBA Stage 2 Business Case.

1.2 The response is based solely on the information presented to Cabinet within the published reports and appendices. No new evidence has been introduced.

1.3 The documentation relied upon includes:

- February 2026 Cabinet Report - Leisure Transformation: Carlton Active RIBA Stage 2
- Alliance Leisure RIBA Stage 2 Report
- Equality Impact Assessment (RIBA Stage 2)
- Equality Impact Assessment - September 2025 (RIBA Stage 0)
- Public and Stakeholder Engagement Report (August 2025)
- Gedling Borough Council Engagement Survey (May-July 2025)
- Carlton Active Business Plan Report (September 2025)
- Gedling Borough Council Leisure Strategy 2025

1.4 Status of the Decision

1.4.1 The Cabinet decision of 19 February 2026 approved progression to RIBA Stages 3 and 4 to enable further development of detailed design, cost certainty, and technical information.

1.4.2 The decision did not constitute final construction approval and did not commit the Council to enter a main construction contract.

1.4.3 Engagement with affected stakeholders, including bowls representatives and governing bodies, continues alongside detailed design development.

1.5 Governance

1.5.1 The development of the Carlton Active proposal, including the proposed facility mix and the position regarding indoor bowls provision, has progressed through a structured governance framework aligned to the RIBA Plan of Work, the Council's Constitution and the Capital Programme approval process. The current position has evolved through staged gateway approvals and has not arisen outside of formal decision-making procedures.

1.5.2 To support feasibility work on Carlton Active, the Council appointed Alliance Leisure Services Ltd as its Development Partner through the UK Leisure Framework, providing a fully compliant direct procurement route, saving time and cost. It enables sector expertise, and a delivery model from feasibility through to construction.

1.5.3 Max Associates were commissioned through the UK Leisure Framework to refresh the Council's Strategic Outcomes Planning Model and develop the updated Leisure Strategy, to reflect post-Covid recovery, portfolio-wide needs, relevant national policy, and the Council's changing financial position, including testing whether consolidation of Carlton Forum and Richard Herrod into a single hub remained the right direction.

1.5.4 Alliance Leisure and its UK Leisure Framework partners are leading industry development consultants for the local authority leisure sector. Our UK Leisure Framework partners have used up to date modelling and costing for facilities, including indoor bowls, utilising latest construction industry benchmarks based on Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) rates. This modelling and its consideration of indoor bowls is reflected in both the Max Associates Carlton Active Business Plan presented to Cabinet in September 2025 and the Alliance Leisure RIBA 2 report presented to Cabinet in February 2026.

1.5.5 At RIBA Stage 0 (Strategic Definition), Cabinet endorsed the strategic need to transform the Council's leisure estate, informed by the updated Leisure Strategy, asset condition, participation trends, and long-term financial sustainability modelling.

1.5.6 At RIBA Stage 1, outline options for the Carlton site were presented to Cabinet on 25 September 2025. These options facility mix recommendations were tested against affordability, operational sustainability, and engagement feedback. It was decided by the Executive that Indoor Bowls would not be a part of the Carlton Active.

1.5.7 Following Cabinet's September 2025 resolution to progress feasibility work, a petition containing 1,021 valid signatures was submitted requesting retention of indoor bowls provision. In accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme, the matter was debated at Full Council on 12 November 2025. Council resolved that the issue be referred to the Executive, recognising that decisions relating to facility mix and capital investment fall within Executive responsibility.

1.5.8 At RIBA Stage 2 (Concept Design), a developed scheme and supporting financial modelling were presented to Cabinet. The proposed facility mix was tested against updated capital costs, revenue projections, and affordability parameters. Alternative configurations, including retention of indoor bowls provision, were assessed. The updated Carlton Active February 2026 Equality Impact Assessment was also considered.

1.5.9 The RIBA Stage 2 decision confirmed progression into RIBA Stages 3 and 4, subject to affordability refinements. This constituted the formal gateway approval of the preferred concept design and facility mix.

1.5.10 The progression from RIBA Stage 0 to Stage 2, alongside Full Council debate of the petition and continued Executive oversight, demonstrates that the current position has been reached through structured options appraisal, financial testing, equality review, and democratic governance. The decision has therefore been taken through a staged and transparent process consistent with the Council's constitutional and capital project controls.

2. Response to Call-In Grounds

2.1 Ground 1 - Lack of Transparency

2.1.1 The Call-In asserts that consultation responses and community submissions were not fully or accurately reflected in the decision-making process.

2.1.2 Engagement with bowls stakeholders was undertaken at multiple stages of the Leisure Transformation Programme. This included two dedicated Bowls Focus Group sessions recorded within the Public and Stakeholder Engagement Report (p.10), structured stakeholder engagement sessions during development of the Leisure Strategy, and direct meetings between consultants, Council officers, and bowls representatives. Engagement discussions also took place with the English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA) and relevant governing bodies to understand technical and facility requirements.

2.1.3 The Public and Stakeholder Engagement Report confirms that the wider engagement programme comprised 16 stakeholder sessions, four public sessions and eleven formal letters (pp.3-4; p.18). Representations from bowls stakeholders were documented within this report.

2.1.4 As part of the Leisure Strategy consultation process, the bowls club submitted a six-rink business case for inclusion within a new facility and alternative redevelopment proposals for the Richard Herrod Centre. These submissions were formally received and considered within the Leisure Strategy 2025 (pp 52 paragraph 8.5.19).

2.1.5 The February 2026 Cabinet Report summarises the petition presented to Full Council and confirms reassessment of indoor bowls provision at RIBA Stage 2 (Cabinet Report, paragraphs 6.2-6.10).

2.1.6 In addition, the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken at RIBA Stage 0 (February 2025) explicitly identified the potential disproportionate impact of removing or relocating bowls provision (pp.3-5, p.13)

2.1.7 In addition to structured consultation and stakeholder engagement activity, a petition containing 1,021 valid signatures was submitted and debated at Full Council in November 2025. The RIBA Stage 2 assessment did not disregard this petition including 3-rink, 4-rink, and 6-rink bowls hall scenarios; rather, it utilised that evidence to test alternative bowls configurations within the constraints of capital affordability and operational sustainability.

2.1.8 The evidence demonstrates that bowls stakeholders were engaged early in the programme, provided opportunities to submit proposals, and were reassessed at RIBA Stage 2.

2.2 Ground 2 - Public Support

2.2.1 The Call-In asserts that statements regarding community backing do not align with evidence presented by bowls stakeholders and other user groups.

2.2.2 The Gedling Borough Council Engagement Survey received 1,490 responses. The survey confirms that the most commonly used facilities across the borough are the main pool (28%) and gym (19%) (p.17)

2.2.3 When asked to identify priorities for upgrade, respondents most frequently selected gym facilities, mind and body activities, physiotherapy, and health improvement services (p.24). Within swimming priorities, the main pool was ranked highest (p.25)

2.2.4 Bowls was selected by 9% of leisure users respondents as a health and wellness priority (p.24). Non-member feedback referencing bowls represented approximately 4% of overall survey responses, demonstrating that bowls provision is highly valued within a defined demographic.

2.2.5 The survey evidence therefore indicates strong support for bowls within its existing user base, but borough-wide participation demand is weighted more heavily toward swimming, gym, and preventative health services.

2.2.6 Cabinet was required to balance targeted stakeholder support with borough-wide participation evidence, capital affordability parameters, and long-term operational sustainability. The decision reflects that balancing exercise.

2.3 Ground 3 - Risk to Public Health and Wellbeing

2.3.1 The Call-In asserts that the removal of indoor bowls presents significant risks to public health and wellbeing, particularly for older and disabled residents.

2.3.2 Two formal Equality Impact Assessments were undertaken: the February 2025 Equality Impact Assessment (RIBA Stage 0) and the updated Equality Impact Assessment appended to the February 2026 Cabinet Report (RIBA Stage 2).

2.3.3 The 2025 EIA explicitly identifies potential disproportionate impact on older and disabled residents arising from removal or relocation of bowls provision (pp.3-5; p.13).

2.3.4 Mitigation measures identified include continued structured engagement with bowls stakeholders, provision of non-financial support to explore alternative venue options, and development of inclusive programming within the new facility (pp.4-5; pp.13-14).

2.3.5 The Carlton Active scheme incorporates features that support mitigation of impact, including an assisted exercise suite, multiple studios enabling low-impact and age-friendly programming, main pool, and learner pool provision suitable for aqua-based low-impact activity, and a community room and social spaces within the café to support social and health-based interventions. Inclusive design principles, including accessibility and dementia-friendly considerations, are embedded within the scheme.

2.3.6 In reaching its decision, Cabinet was required to consider whether the identified adverse impact on bowls users was justified in the context of wider borough-wide preventative health benefits, participation demand, and affordability constraints.

2.3.7 The progression to RIBA Stages 3 and 4 reflects a judgement that, while disproportionate impact exists for a defined user group, the scheme as a whole delivers broader preventative health benefits for the community.

2.4 Ground 4 - Failure to Properly Explore Reasonable Alternatives

2.4.1 The Call-In asserts that reasonable alternatives were not properly explored and that there is no comparable indoor provision within the Borough.

2.4.2 Indoor bowls provision was considered at RIBA Stage 0 and was formally reassessed at RIBA Stage 2.

2.4.3 The Carlton Active Business Plan Report models multiple operational scenarios, including options with and without indoor bowls (pp.4). The modelling includes five-year income and expenditure projections (pp.7-8), usage modelling (pp.9), sensitivity testing (pp.14-16), and a summary of financial performance (pp.19)

2.4.4 Indicative capital costs for a six-rink bowls facility are identified at between £5.6 million and £7.0 million depending on specification (pp.20).

2.4.5 The Business Plan recognises the social benefits of bowls but concludes that the facility is not anticipated to generate sufficient surplus to offset capital and operational costs (pp.20).

2.4.6 The six-rink business case submitted by the bowls club was therefore tested against independent revenue modelling, capital affordability limits, operational sustainability assumptions, and sensitivity testing.

2.4.7 The RIBA Stage 2 reassessment concluded that inclusion of bowls provision within the Carlton Active footprint would materially increase capital cost and either require reduction of core facilities or necessitate borrowing beyond approved affordability parameters.

2.4.8 The proposals for a new build construction, rather than a refurbishment or extension, enable a compact and efficient building to meet identified demand while maintaining operational efficiency and controlling capital and long-term energy costs. It ensures thermal zoning has informed the internal layout. This approach improves the energy efficiency of the building, enables more targeted environmental control, and supports reduced energy consumption over the life of the facility, consistent with Passivhaus-informed principles.

2.4.9 A refurbishment or expansion of the current site to retain the current bowl hall, would likely increase costs of the project and significantly restrict the opportunities set out in 2.4.9 to develop a modern energy efficient building. In addition, the RIBA2 report states (p.29), the physical constraints of the site are a key factor. The available land area limits the scale of development that can be accommodated without compromising functionality or accessibility. Incorporating a bowls hall of any size would require a significantly larger footprint, which would either exceed the developable area or necessitate the removal or reduction of other essential elements of the leisure centre. This would likely result in the omission of key facilities such as the swimming pool or gym, which are regarded as core components of the centre and are supported by the strongest levels of user demand.

2.4.10 The design proposals move the building footprint away from neighbouring properties and its height and design in a form to mitigate impact on neighbouring residents.

2.4.11 Cabinet was presented with this modelling and was required to determine whether inclusion remained viable within the Council's capital and financial framework.

2.4.12 Gedling Indoor Bowls Club consistently stated throughout engagement workshops, formal consultation letters, and their submissions to the Leisure Strategy that any indoor bowls provision below six rinks would not be viable for maintaining membership levels, sustaining league and county competition requirements, or ensuring long-term financial and

operational sustainability. This position is clearly recorded within the Bowls Focus Group findings, where participants emphasised that “the community highlights the need for sufficient facilities (Public & Stakeholder Engagement Report, p.10).

2.4.13 Additionally, the presence of formal representations from the club and associated bodies is confirmed through the consultation letters listed within the same report (Leisure Strategy 2025, p.18).

The English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA) further reinforced this requirement during their engagement with the Council, confirming that rink capacity is essential for delivering club leagues, county fixtures, and preliminary rounds of national competitions (Leisure Strategy 2025, Table 4 – English Indoor Bowls Association Survey Responses, p.47). Based on this consistent and authoritative evidence, options involving fewer than six rinks were excluded from the facility-mix considerations at RIBA Stage 0-1.

2.4.14 Following the September 2025 Cabinet decision, the Council has continued to engage with Gedling Indoor Bowls Club, and this has included the completion of feasibility work to explore alternative site options for indoor bowls provision.

3. Overall, Officer Conclusion

3.1 Cabinet had before it detailed technical feasibility analysis, independent financial modelling, and sensitivity testing, two Equality Impact Assessments, structured consultation evidence, borough-wide survey data, and the adopted Leisure Strategy 2025.

3.2 The removal of indoor bowls provision represents a disproportionate impact on a defined user group. That impact was identified at RIBA Stage 0, reassessed at RIBA Stage 2 and mitigation measures were identified.

3.3 The bowls business case and alternative proposals were tested through independent modelling and were found to increase capital cost and compromise overall project viability within the Council’s affordability framework.

3.4 Cabinet was required to balance equalities impacts against borough-wide participation demand, preventative health objectives, site constraints, and financial sustainability.

3.5 The proposal has progressed through formal gateway approvals, consultation, Full Council petition debate and Executive decision-making.