

## Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)



Name of proposal	Jacob's Wells Baths CAT
Directorate and Service Area	Place Directorate, Strategic Property
Name of Lead Officer	John Bos

### Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

#### 1.1 What is the proposal?

Our proposal is to grant a 'community asset transfer' (CAT) of the former Hotwells Public Baths (Jacob's Wells Road, BS8 1DX) to Fusion Lifestyle, who will convert the property into a new swimming pool, multi-purpose dance/exercise studios, meeting/community spaces, and a café.

The CAT will be in the form of a Lease for 35 years, linked to a Service Agreement, at a 'peppercorn rent'. The Lease places the responsibility for all repairs, maintenance and ongoing running costs on Fusion. Fusion will also cover the full cost of carrying out urgent repairs, fitting out and bringing the property back into full use.

The Lease will also ensure that the Council can share in future profits, once the project is financially viable and produces a surplus.

After the public baths closed in the late 1970s, it was leased to the Bristol Community Dance Centre, who converted it into a community-managed dance centre. This closed in 2016 and the property is currently used on a meanwhile basis by Artspace Lifespace for a range of arts, dance and community activities under a licence agreement.

The property is Grade II listed, but is currently in poor condition, does not have a proper heating system and is not wheelchair accessible. When the proposed CAT goes ahead, the current, temporary uses will cease and be displaced. The main impact of this will be on local residents, who use the property for community meetings and events, and on artists, including dance, performing art and a sculptor.

Rather than sell the property on the open market, the Council agreed to invite expressions of interest from third sector organisations, to explore the options for its continued community use. The proposed CAT to Fusion will ensure the building's primary use remains for leisure, arts and community, without the Council having to carry out any of the repairs (est cost £400-500K) and with the prospect of a profit share if the project is successful in the future.

## **Step 2: What information do we have?**

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

### **2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?**

Because the Council does not directly manage the property, we have no data about the exact numbers of current building users, nor their backgrounds. We do know that there are long-standing issues with poor accessibility, low lighting levels, cold/damp environments and a generally unwelcoming physical environment. The proposal is expected to impact mainly on disabled and older people. The building currently does not have access for wheelchair users, nor an accessible toilet. The huge improvements that Fusion proposes to make to the building will open up this historic building to wheelchair users and other disabled people, and will also make it much more accessible to older people, parents/carers with prams/pushchairs, and people with limited mobility.

### **2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?**

The property is currently open and available to anyone, but its usage is low and the primary use is by members of the local community, dancers and artists. The

proposed new use is expected to attract a much wider range of people, including those from beyond the local community.

Fusion has a clear and broad equalities and diversity policy that seeks to ensure all its premises are inclusive environments and its facilities are accessible to everybody. This will result not only in greater participation by young people, older people and disabled people, but also future users from other protected characteristics groups. Fusion wishes this unique property to become a welcoming and inclusive community facility for the local area and also for residents from across Bristol who are looking for this type of leisure experience.

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

Detailed engagement has taken place with interested parties from the local community and from the arts sector. From the project's start the Council has worked closely with the Jacob's Wells Community Hub Group (representing the local community) and with Artspace Lifespace (representing a wide range of artists and community users). We held a public information event in February 2017 to publicise the CAT and encourage expressions of interest. In May 2017 we held a technical workshop for interested CAT applicants. We used a Selection Panel to select and interview all bidders. The Panel was made up of Council officers, councillors, a representative for the local community and a representative for the arts sector.

### **Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?**

Analysis of impacts on people with protected characteristics must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts in this section, referring to all of the equalities groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

Not anticipated.

3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?

Not applicable.

3.3 Does the proposal create any benefits for people with protected

characteristics?

We anticipate significant benefits for disabled people, older people, pregnant women and parents/carers with young children. The proposed leisure/sports uses are expected to benefit people experiencing obesity and poor emotional health and we anticipate that the proposed exercise/sports classes will help to improve mental ill health and the wellbeing of future users.

The pro-active implementation of Fusion's equality & diversity policy will help to ensure that people from all backgrounds and abilities are catered for and feel welcome at the new Jacob's Wells Baths facilities.

Fusion will also offer concessionary prices for people in the Council's recognised 'priority groups' who wish to access the facilities, to enable them to take part at prices that are no more than a specified percentage of the prices for general users. This will include people in receipt of certain types of benefits, people of certain age groups and disabled people.

3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?

The property currently does not have level access, does not have a lift, has steep connecting stairs and is not welcoming to ambulant disabled people. Very significant investment is required to mitigate the existing hurdles and limitations. Fusion's proposals are by far the most rigorous and involve the largest investment in the fabric of the building from all the bidders. In the current financial climate, the proposed CAT to Fusion is therefore expected to be the most effective option for maximising access for disabled people. The proposed renovation will totally transform the building's accessibility and will make it accessible to people who have previously been unable to access or use the building and partake in activities.

#### **Step 4: So what?**

The Equality Impact Assessment must be able to influence the proposal and decision. This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings of your Equality Impact Assessment can be measured going forward.

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?

We anticipate that the assessment will endorse the approach taken to date and will support the grant of CAT to Fusion. The need for substantial investment has played a deciding role in the Panel's decision making process and has helped to select the bidder with the widest offer to the local community and to making this listed building accessible.

4.2 What actions have been identified going forward?

Ensuring that the property is renovated and fitted out in accordance with Part M of the Building regulations, but also that this takes account of the guidance and requirements set out in the Council's Environmental Access Standards.

4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

Part M compliance will be measured through the statutory Planning and Building Control processes that will govern any alterations and changes to the fabric of the building.

Adherence to the Environmental Access Standards will be measured through compliance with the relevant Lease and Service Agreement clauses. The Service Agreement will be monitored annually and reviewed/renewed every 5 years. Continued breaches of the Service Agreement will constitute a breach of Lease covenants, which would give the Council the power to end the Lease and take control of the property.

Service Director Sign-Off:	Equalities Officer Sign Off: Cherene Whitfield
Date:	Date: 09/11/17