

WOKING POOL PLANS NOT A PRIORITY FOR EARLY 70'S SOUTH-EAST SPORTS COUNCIL

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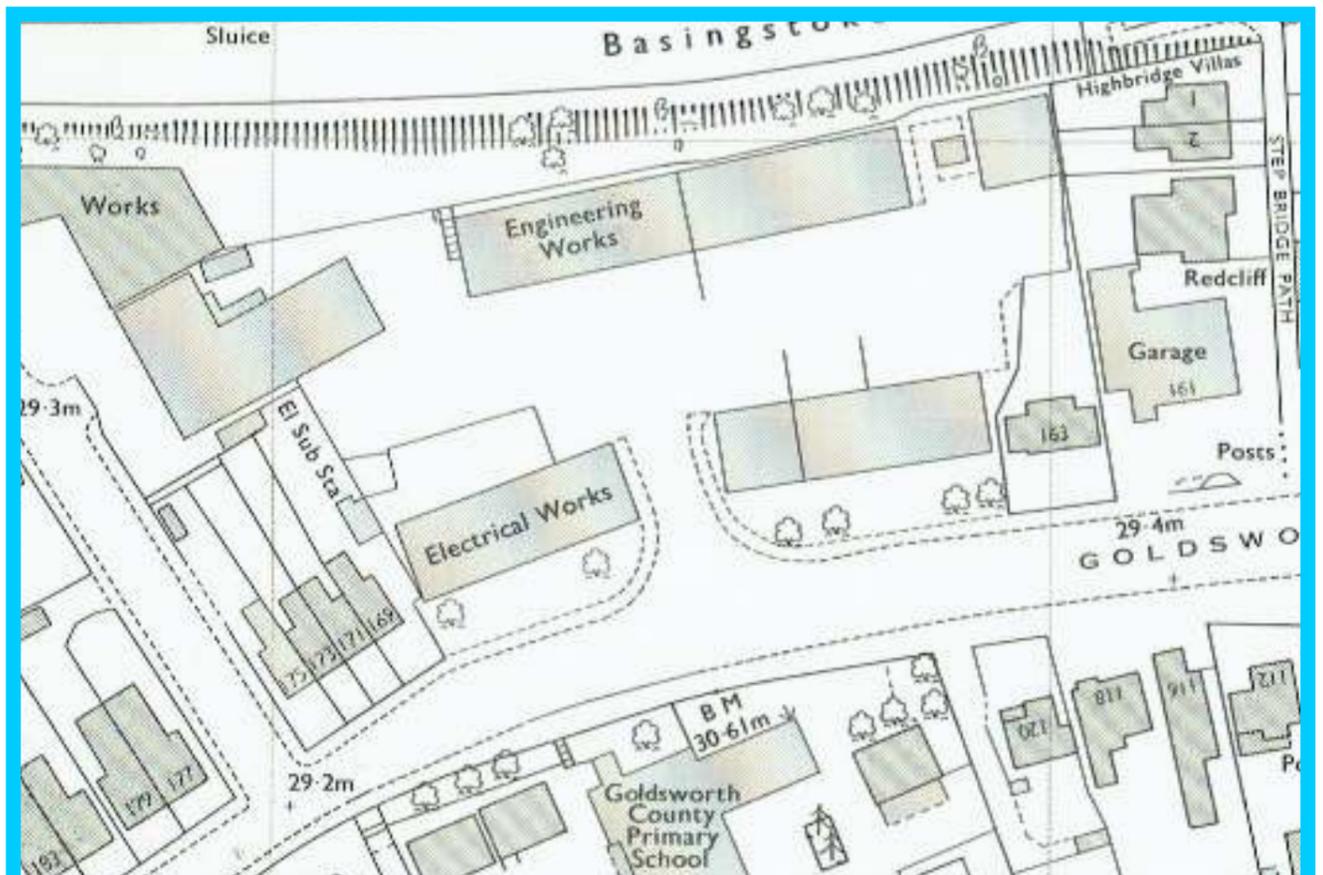
A suggestion that a cheaper, 'second' indoor pool should be built on the Council Office site, the Goldsworth Road Depot (below), or in the Park, were also turned down, whilst plans for the 'first' indoor pool dragged on.

A few years ago, whilst writing about Woking in the early 1930's, I mentioned a scheme in 1931 to construct 'a covered and heated swimming bath on a site in Goldsworth Road' (Woking Advertiser, 19th August 2016). Nothing came of the idea, of course, and instead Woking Council decided to build a new open-air pool in Woking Park – but the idea of an indoor pool did not entirely go away.

The new Lido in the park was estimated to cost about £10,000 (much less than an indoor pool), but by the time it was opened by the Duke of Sutherland in 1935, the cost had more than doubled!

After the Second World War, with plans to redevelop Woking Town Centre, the idea of building an indoor pool in the new 'Civic Area' was announced, but in February 1966 the Surveyor to Woking Council, Mr D.N. Ward, suggested that 'when Woking had a population of 100,000 (by 1981, it was estimated), at least two indoor pools would be needed', so 'why not proceed with the building of the second of these pools on a site outside the Civic Area' right away.

It was again suggested that that 'second' pool could be constructed on the site of the Council Depot in Goldsworth Road, or failing that (as



there would be limited parking there), part of the Council Office site in Mount Hermon Road. The third suggested site (and probably the most favoured) was the old archery range in Woking Park.

Here, for just £200,000, an indoor pool 'of reduced standard and cost', with limited

accommodation for spectators and no cafe (just tea and coffee dispensers) could be constructed. It would still be to 'national' standard – 110ft x 42ft – but unlike the town centre pool (which would cost between £300,000 and £400,000) it would not include a training pool and better amenities.



That was still considerably less than the £1¼m that a proper sized international pool measuring 165ft x 65ft would cost, but that was obviously a step too far for Woking's Councillors, as first the 'second' pool idea was turned down and then the main 'centre pool' plan was put on hold.

When the initial design of the new pool was eventually announced late in 1967 the 'national standard' had apparently shrunk to 82ft.6in. x 42ft, with a 41ft x 24ft wide 'training area' being able to be partitioned off from the main pool when necessary. There was to be seating for 200 spectators around the main pool and

20-30 seats at the training pool, with provision for a separate diving pool as well - although in the autumn of 1968 it was suggested that as Guildford were about to start work on their indoor pool, which also included a diving pit, the designs for Woking's could be amended to exclude such a feature.



Summer fun at Woking Lido in the Park was fine whilst the sun was out...

...but in the winter local swimmers had to head to Guildford or Walton for a dip (let alone a dive).



Unsurprisingly the suggestion to cut out the diving pool and build a much shorter pool was slammed by many critics who pointed out that it 'would make it impossible to hold any county galas or championships there', with the local Swimming Club noting that a larger pool could bring money into the town.

Ironically, the outdoor pool in Woking Park was slightly larger than the international standard at

165ft x 70ft, but a compromise proposal by Cllr James Marsh (Labour, Sheerwater), to build a roof over the old Lido was also be rejected on cost!

In the end, with estimated costs spiralling to £450,000, the Council decided to just plan for the one indoor pool in the Civic Area of the proposed New Town Centre – with work vaguely scheduled to start in the 1970-71 or 1971-72 financial year.

That was until the South East Sports Council recommended to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in January 1970 that funding for the pool should be delayed as priority was 'not high in view of other pools in the area' (namely Walton-on-Thames and Guildford).

Woking, it seemed, was about to miss out yet again because of dithering and delays by its councillors and officials.

