

Following a request from the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, the following note has been provided on athletics provision.

Sports Facilities and Recreation Strategy

UDC has commissioned Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP) to prepare a Sports Strategy. The consultants are working with the Council's Planning officers and Communities Team as well as with Sport England, Active Essex, National Governing Bodies (NGB) and local clubs in undertaking the project and preparing the strategy.

The overarching aim of the project is to provide a detailed evidence based assessment of the existing sport and recreation facilities in Uttlesford, the sport and recreational needs of the future residents of Uttlesford up to 2033 but also beyond in relation to the proposed Garden Communities; and a clear strategy for the provision of sport and recreational facilities to meet this need in the potential growth areas.

The Study comprises three areas – Indoor and Built Facilities; Playing Pitch Strategy and Open Space and play areas.

Athletics

Athletics is dealt with as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy. An assessment has been undertaken and considers supply, demand, latent and future demand.

A summary of the findings of the assessment in relation to athletics

- There is currently no purpose-built athletics facility in Uttlesford.
- There are three prominent running clubs; Saffron Striders Running Club, Bishops Stortford Running Club and Yak Yak, as well as a successful triathlon club operating in the area; WaldenTri.
- Saffron Striders Running Club and Bishops Stortford Running Club are also RunTogether groups¹.
- Both WaldenTri, Saffron Striders and Yak Yak report demand for a dedicated home base, to support with the growth of junior participation and increase social opportunities, as well as allowing for revenue generation. The clubs would be happy to consider a joined-up approach, potentially alongside other sporting clubs in the area to make such a facility more sustainable.
- In addition to latent demand expressed through Sport England's Segmentation Tool, Saffron Striders also reports latent demand to establish a junior section. However, it currently feels unable to achieve this without a dedicated clubhouse base.
- It is to be expected that the popularity of the Parkrun events and national running events, as well as demand for RunTogether groups, will increase in the future following national trends.
- Based on latent demand in the area, there is likely demand to consider operating more running events such as Parkrun in the area.

¹ RunTogether is an official England Athletics recreational running project which aims to get the whole nation running. The role of RunTogether is to provide enjoyable, supportive and inclusive running opportunities across England in the form of set routes, running groups and access to programmes such as Find a Guide and Mental Health Ambassadors.

As part of the Assessment report, information is provided on Compact athletic facilities². England Athletics has adopted UK Athletics' strategic position that we should concentrate on preserving and improving the existing stock of 400m tracks rather than seeking to build additional ones. However, there are areas in the country where journey time to the nearest full size outdoor track is longer than ideal, and there are places where good coaching has created significant demand despite the lack of a local athletics facility.

The Compact Athletics concept is intended to fill this gap, providing training facilities in places where there is insufficient demand, funding or land to accommodate a full-size track.

A Compact Athletics facility can take a number of forms, but essentially provides a strip of synthetic track plus some capacity for jumps and throws, enabling core athletic skills to be taught, enjoyed and developed.

Next stage

KKP are now working on the Strategy which will be signed off by Sport England and the National Governing Bodies. This is anticipated to be finalised in May/June.

² More details of this concept can be found at <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/other-design-guidance/>