

# SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL ATHLETICS ASSESSMENT

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### ATHLETICS

#### Introduction

As a Governing Body, UK Athletics is responsible for developing and implementing the rules and regulations of the sport, including everything from anti-doping, health and safety, facilities and welfare, to training and education for coaches and officials and permitting and licensing. Locally it is governed through England Athletics via a team consisting of an area manager and coach/club support officers.

#### *Consultation*

There is one athletics club in Solihull; Solihull & Small Heath Athletic Club. The Club did not respond to consultation requests. Instead, information was derived from track providers as well as UK Athletics.

#### Supply

There are two athletics tracks in Solihull, one at North Solihull Sports Centre (Site ID: 274) and one at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre (Site ID: 296).

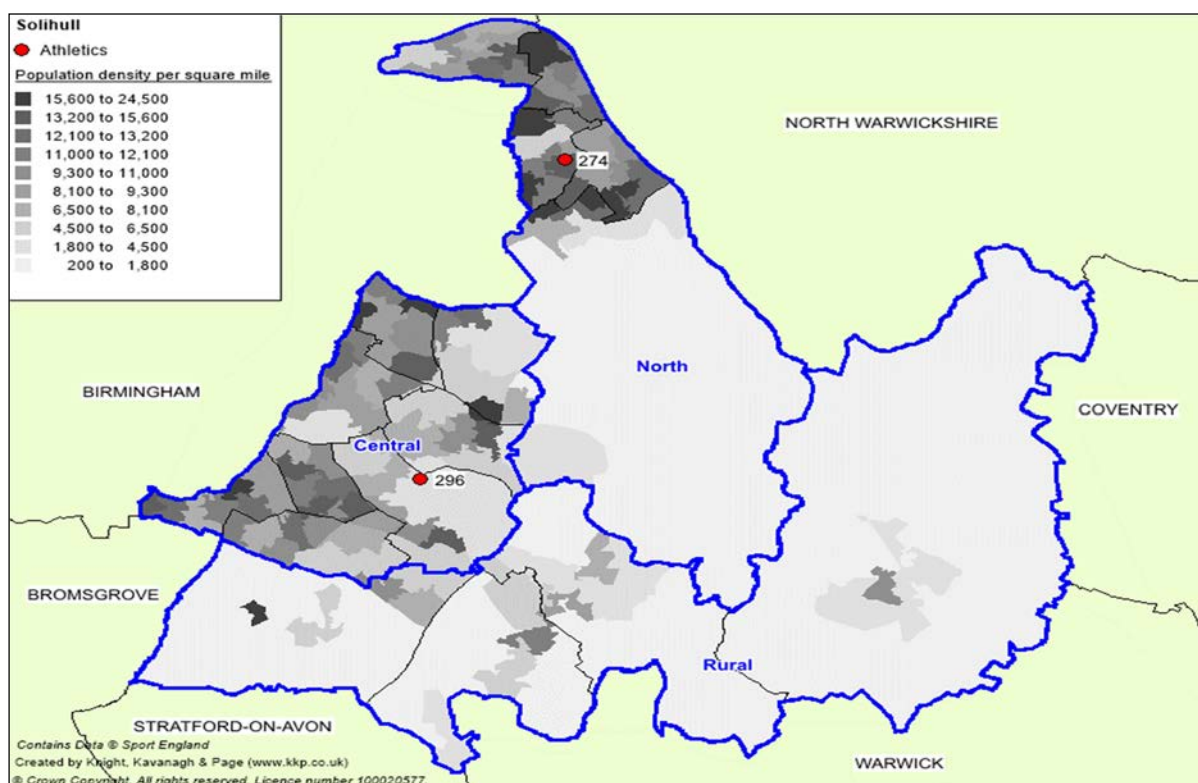
North Solihull Sports Centre provides a 400-metre synthetic track that has six lanes in addition to two sand pits for jumping events. The track surrounds a floodlit sand-based AGP, meaning throwing events are not possible.

Tudor Grange Leisure Centre is also a 400-metre synthetic track, but it provides eight lanes, has its own floodlighting and is accompanied by a covered stand that can accommodate 576 people. The track surrounds a grass playing field (containing an adult football pitch) that is used for throwing events and is serviced by a throwing cage as well as sand pits for jumping events. The facility is fully certified to host high level competition.

As can be seen overleaf in figure 1, both athletics tracks are situated in the most densely populated areas of Solihull and are therefore considered to be easily accessible to accommodate local demand.

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Figure 1: Location of athletics tracks in Solihull



## Quality

The track located at North Solihull Sports Centre is assessed as being poor quality as a consequence of its faded line markings and damage to the surface. There has been no refurbishment since 1995 and, as such, the track has considerably exceeded its lifespan. In addition, although some lighting is received from the *in situ* AGP, the track itself is not adequately lit, resulting in limited use during winter months. Furthermore, the facility does not offer a throwing cage or an alternative throwing area, meaning the site is limited in its ability to accommodate potential club users.

In contrast, the track located at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre is fully certified by UK Athletics to host high level competition and offers a full range of athletics facilities, meaning quality is considered to be good. That being said, the track has not been refurbished since 2001 and imminent resurfacing is therefore recommended before quality deterioration occurs. The estimated lifespan of a synthetic track is ten years depending on usage and maintenance levels.

## Ancillary provision

Clubhouse facilities including changing rooms, toilet and showers are both available at North Solihull Sports Centre and Tudor Grange Leisure Centre and are accessible for all track users. No issues were highlighted through consultation and as such it is assumed that ancillary facilities are deemed to be adequate for current needs.

## Demand

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There is one athletics club in Solihull; Solihull and Small Heath Athletics Club. In addition, there is a Park Run event as well as several running clubs operating in the area.

### ***Solihull & Small Heath Athletics Club***

Solihull & Small Heath Athletics Club accesses Tudor Grange Leisure Centre on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for midweek training. In addition, the Club competes in a range of competitions and leagues meaning it also has requirements to utilise the facility on weekends. It does not access North Solihull Sports Centre.

The Club caters for men, women, boys and girls of all ages within amateur athletics and competes in track and field leagues such as the Heart of England League, the Midland Track and Field League and the UK Youth Development League. In addition, various cross-country and road running leagues are accessed as well as county, area and national championships.

To join the Club, it costs £28 per annum for juniors (under 17), £38 per annum for seniors (17-65) and £28 per annum for veterans (over 65). This is in addition to a £13 England Athletics affiliation fee which applies to all ages.

Current membership figures are unknown.

### **West Midlands Schools Athletic Association**

Formed in 1974, the West Midlands Schools Athletic Association is an athletics organisation covering the whole of the West Midlands, including Solihull. The organisation aims to promote the athletic talent from educational establishments within the area and produce talented athletes who are able to compete at high level competition. It is deemed that the Association enables a performance pathway for talented athletes based in the area to progress in a focused athletic environment.

### ***Park Run***

Park Run is a series of 5k runs held on Saturday mornings in areas of open space around the UK. They are open to all, free and are safe and easy to take part in. For those aged between 4 and 14, junior Park Run events are also available. In order to take part, runners must first register online in order to access a printed barcode that provides access to all Park Run events.

In Solihull, there is one Park Run event that takes place every Saturday from 9am at Brueton Park. Since its inception in August 2010, 9,066 different runners have participated in the race and an average of 231 runners participate weekly, with the highest attendance recorded at 501 people.

There are no junior Park Run events in Solihull, with the nearest one held at Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham.

### ***Run Together***

Run Together (previously known as Run England) is an official England Athletics recreational running project that aims to get the whole nation running. The role of Run Together includes:

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- ◀ Enabling people to join registered running groups.
- ◀ Supporting affiliated clubs and other partners in the provision of running groups for an increasing range of people.
- ◀ Training more people to qualify as running group leaders through the Leadership in Running Fitness qualification.
- ◀ Signposting people to 3-2-1 routes that have been created by local providers.

There are no Run Together groups identified in Solihull, with the closest affiliated group situated in Birmingham City Centre.

### **Running Clubs**

In addition to the pre-discussed athletics club operating in Solihull, there are also several running clubs. These predominantly utilise roads and local running routes and therefore do not have a requirement to access athletic tracks. Listed below are all clubs identified as operating in Solihull:

- ◀ Centurion Running Club
- ◀ Balsall Common Run Club
- ◀ Elmdon Running Group
- ◀ Knowle and Dorridge Running Club
- ◀ Mums on the Run

### **3-2-1 routes**

3-2-1 is a project that aims to provide a range of marked out running or jogging routes across the country that anyone can have a go at. It is considered a way of providing a meaningful challenge to help more people to get running when it best suits them. Local providers (working in partnership with athletics clubs and running groups) can mark out routes that are 3, 2 and 1 miles, kilometres or laps.

There are currently no 3-2-1 routes in Solihull.

### **10.4: Supply and demand analysis**

England Athletics guidance states that for a running track to be sustainable it should be hosting at least 200 members. As Tudor Grange Leisure Centre accommodates significantly more than this, it should be retained and protected, with priority focused on ensuring that quality is sustained to continue accommodating the demand received from Solihull and Small Heath Athletics Club.

North Solihull Sports Centre is not accessed by any clubs and is instead used predominately by local schools to host internal sports days in addition to wider school competitions. As such, it is deemed to have significant capacity to be greater utilised in the future. That being said, to attract demand to the site and to enable demand to be better accommodated, quality improvements are necessary.

In addition, precedence should be placed on sustaining and increasing the popularity of the Park Run event as well as supporting the various running clubs and disability groups that are providing for the population of Solihull.

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Finally, future options should be explored in relation to Run Together groups and 3-2-1 routes given that none are currently in place.

### **Athletics summary**

- ◀ There are two synthetic athletic tracks in Solihull, situated at North Solihull Sports Centre and Tudor Grange Leisure Centre.
- ◀ The athletics track situated at North Solihull Sports Centre is poor quality whilst the track at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre is good quality.
- ◀ There is one athletics club in Solihull; Solihull & Small Heath Athletics Club.
- ◀ In addition, there is a Park Run event as well as various running groups.
- ◀ There are no affiliated Run Together groups and no 3-2-1 routes are provided.
- ◀ Priority should be focused on ensuring the quality at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre is sustained and the synthetic track improved when opportunities are available too.
- ◀ Opportunities should be explored to better utilise the athletics track at North Solihull Sports Centre in addition to quality improvements.
- ◀ Precedence should also be placed on sustaining and increasing the popularity of the Park Run event as well as supporting the various running clubs.
- ◀ Future options should be explored in relation to Run Together groups and 3-2-1 routes given that none are currently in place.