

MEETING PAPER

Meeting: Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

Date: 21/01/25

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Details

Proposal for an Active Track in Lowestoft

Written by Ewan, Sports Development Officer

On **January 9th, 2025**, I held a Teams call with representatives from England Athletics (EA) to explore the potential for new athletic facilities in Lowestoft. Joining the discussion were **Ed Hunt** (National Facilities and Planning Manager) and **Kirsty Fardel** (Club Support Officer for the East).

Initial Concept:

I reached out to EA to discuss the feasibility of installing a 100- or 200-metre running track at the *Denes Oval*, along with complementary field facilities such as a long jump area. However, EA introduced an alternative concept: the '**active track**', which aligns with their shift away from traditional running tracks toward more inclusive, community-focused facilities.

What is an Active Track?

Active tracks are multi-use, inclusive facilities designed to promote **health and wellbeing** while encouraging **community engagement**. Unlike traditional tracks, active tracks serve a broader purpose:

- **Accessibility:** Suitable for walking, running, and cycling.
- **Multi-Use Appeal:** Ideal for club activities, school programs, and community initiatives.
- **Health Benefits:** Encourages physical activity for people of all ages and abilities.

EA provided two useful resources to illustrate the concept:

1. [Active Design - Case Study: Sowerby Sports Village](#)
2. [Sowerby Sports Village Update - August 2020](#)

Why Lowestoft Needs an Active Track:

An active track would benefit a wide range of users, including:

- Local clubs like **Waveney Valley Athletic Club** and **Lowestoft Road Runners** for training and events.
- Schools and organisations for **cycling lessons** and other activities.
- The general public seeking **free and accessible opportunities** to stay active.

Additionally, active tracks promote **active travel**, which aligns with goals to address the climate emergency.

Proposed Location: Normanston Park

I believe **Normanston Park** is the ideal site for an active track. The park already has high foot traffic with walkers and runners, and a track would enhance its existing facilities. The proposed design includes a **1-kilometre loop** running just inside the current path, as illustrated below.



Key benefits of a Normanston Park location:

- **Accessibility:** Open to walkers, runners, and cyclists.
- **Safety Enhancements:** Lighting could increase usage during winter months and provide a safer environment, particularly for women.
- **Free Access:** Fully aligned with LTC's commitment to free-to-use sports facilities.

Funding and Support:

EA confirmed that East Suffolk ranks fourth on their priority list for new tracks and facilities, demonstrating a clear need. While EA does not directly fund projects, they offer full support for funding applications to organisations like **Sport England** and **British Cycling**. Past projects have successfully secured funding through these channels, and EA believes this project has strong potential.

Why an Active Track Instead of a Pump Track?

While a pump track is also a valid proposal, I believe an active track would provide far greater benefits to the community:

- **Broader Appeal:** An active track serves walkers, runners, and cyclists of all skill levels, whereas a pump track primarily targets BMX or mountain bike riders.
- **Accessibility:** Pump tracks require specialised bikes, which can be costly and limit participation. An active track accommodates all types of bicycles and supports other forms of activity.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** An active track has a more significant impact on promoting community health and wellbeing.

While I acknowledge the benefits of a pump track, I firmly believe an active track is the more inclusive, impactful, and sustainable choice for Normanston Park. Therefore, I propose that an active track is considered instead of a pump track at Normanston Park.

Potential Project Timeline and Predicted Cost

As a potential project timeline, we could look at funding for an active track to be within the **26/27 budget** and for it to be installed within **spring 2026**. The case study found at the start of the document was approximately **280k** all in, I would hope this cost would be reduced for LTC based upon accessing other funding streams. That was for a **two lane 1.2-kilometre loop**, which would probably be similar to what we would look to have.

Recommendations/Decision

A discussion/comparison to be had regarding an active track vs pump track and consider actions for the Sports Development Officer to take away.