

Walthamstow Track & Pool Development

Waltham Forest Pool



In 1962, the Waltham Forest Pool in Chingford Road opened. This was built on part of the Town Hall extensive site and was intended to replace the existing aging Public Baths & Swimming Pool in the High Street. These were now over 60 years old and although they were extremely modern when they were built, were no longer 'fit for purpose' of the present time.

The new swimming pool was 'state of art' development for the times. It had been built to Olympic pool specifications and the facilities included; male and female changing rooms, a small (Teaching) and large swimming pool, 1, 3 and 5 metres diving boards and most importantly, a 12ft deep diving pit. However, although regarded as commonplace today, what caused most public interest was that there was a café and viewing gallery that allowed you to watch swimmers under the water. When it first opened there was a seemingly endless procession of swimmers striking poses in front of the viewing gallery for the benefit of spectators.



A Dedicated Athletics Facility

In 1984, Waltham Forest Council carried out further development to the Town Hall site by building the long awaited athletics track. Hitherto, local athletes had been forced to travel to other nearby tracks like Haringey or Woodford Green to train on a proper athletics track. The new track meant that there was now a local Athletic Club

headquarters and that children from Waltham Forest schools could experience training at dedicated athletic facilities.

Presently the athletic track is the home of *Walthamstow Athletic Club* that was formed in 1901 . It's not a big time club and is a small dedicated group athletes who compete in Southern League Div 4 for Track & Field, and the Chingford League for Road and Cross Country.

Some refurbishments were carried out to the facility in 2006.



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Above: Waltham Forest's own former British champion - Jeanette Kwakye leading local QuadKids in a training session



Above: Henry Maynard school children racing at their sports day

The Fitness Centre



The Fitness Centre was built in 2002. The addition of this facility enabled the Centre to offer a comprehensive 'well being' package to Waltham Forest residents that included :

Women only classes; Soft Play; Tots Water World; wheelchair accessible Children's pool & 25 metre pools; Diving pit; Fitness centre; Studio & group exercise classes; a unisex accessible changing room with a fold-down seat and handrails (and accessible toilet opposite) and an Athletics track

Refurbish Or Rebuild?



Above: Google Earth map showing the site location

Although refurbishments were carried out in 1991, the pool facility is now over 50 years old and considerable expenditure is needed to modernise and upgrade it to meet present day expectations and needs. These costs were balanced against the costs, benefits and extended use that would be obtained by developing a completely new centre and the decision was taken to redevelop and provide a new Leisure Centre

A Waltham Forest Leisure Centre



Above: An artist's impressions of the new development

Waltham Forest Pool and Track is being rebuilt as part of the Council's multi-million pound improvement programme to leisure facilities across the borough. Following the recent opening of Leytonstone Leisure Centre, Waltham Forest Council's £24.5m leisure centre improvement programme has also already seen major transformations made to Chingford, Leyton and Walthamstow (Former Kelmscott) Leisure Centres, all of which now boast first class facilities at affordable prices. The work is all part of the Council's major programme of work to create six high quality leisure centres and gyms for residents across the borough.

State Of The Art

The Waltham Forest Pool and Track rebuild will give residents a brand new leisure centre with state of the art sport, health and fitness facilities. The main building needed costly repairs and has now closed to allow for demolition work to start but the track will remain open for club and school use.

When completed the first-class leisure centre will offer competition and teaching pools, a new gym, two dance studios, an extreme sports area with climbing wall, spa and sauna area, a crèche and more.

The planning application is due to go the Planning Committee on Tuesday 3rd February 2015 before a final decision is made. Once rebuilt, the centre will be called Waltham Forest Leisure Centre.

Bill Bayliss

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Some Resources used in this article:

<http://www.better.org.uk/leisure/waltham-forest-pool-and-track/page/750>

[http://www.guardianseries.co.uk/news/picgalleries/quadkids/view/gallery_336265.Quad Kids Competition at Walthamstow Pool and Track/](http://www.guardianseries.co.uk/news/picgalleries/quadkids/view/gallery_336265.Quad_Kids_Competition_at_Walthamstow_Pool_and_Track/)

<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Documents/Waltham%20Forest%20Leisure%20Centre%20HEA%2021-05-2http://sports-facilities.co.uk/sites/view/1002425014.pdf>

<http://www.british-athletics.co.uk/clubs/club0206.htm>

<https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/pages/campaigns/betterplace.aspx>

<https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Pages/Campaigns/betterleisure.aspx>

Afterword

Possibly apocryphal ? Although, in 1982, the Waltham Forest Pool was supposed to be built to Olympic standards. After it was built, it was discovered that there had been a miscalculation and that the pool was actually fractionally smaller than the Olympic standard.