

## Rifle club welcomes prospect of new leisure centre



TOM JACKSON/BBC

The club, in the Manor Leisure Centre, has a 25-metre indoor range

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A rifle club hopes multi-million-pound leisure centre improvements could help it become a "centre for excellence".

Whittlesey Rifle Club said its new building, which would be built to the side of a redeveloped Manor Leisure Centre in the Cambridgeshire town, could be even better than the last.

It hoped to get an "Olympic standard" 10m air rifle range as well as further funding for target retrieval and better shooting systems for people with impaired vision.

The club previously feared it could be left without a base after Fenland District Council announced parts of the centre would be demolished.

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TOM JACKSON/BBC

| Alan Bessant (left), Andy Surtees (centre) and David Ransome are members of the Whittlesey Rifle Club

The club, which is home to Paralympic shooting gold medallist [Matt Skelhon](#), welcomed the redevelopment which comes as a wider [£23m Fenland project, external](#) to enhance four of the district's leisure centres.

Alan Bessant, from the rifle club, said when the council looked to replace the leisure centre the club noticed "there was a cost to knock down our building, but nothing included to rebuild it".

"We have always been what we like to call 'the best kept secret in the town', but it made us much more pro-active telling people about the club," he added.

After advertising the club, he said councillors swung behind it and made the unanimous vote "to not only to provide us with a new building but a better building as part of the new development".

He said the club was inclusive and had a "generational interest".

"I think people see the benefit to youth... [aged] from three to 103, even if people become less able-bodied, they can still come and do the sport and join the social environment," he said.

They estimated it could be about three years before they moved to the new site.

"We are ploughing on here and making this building the best it can be and then looking forward to when that [new] building is ready," Mr Bessant said.

The club hoped to be accessible for all people and wanted to encourage Paralympians who needed places to train to visit Whittlesey.

Investment needed for the new systems, like shooting and target retrieval, were estimated to cost about £60,000.

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The club building has been at the leisure centre since the early 1970s, club members said