

From: deputychair@ncfq.uk
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED];
[REDACTED]
advisor@ncfq.uk; chair@ncfq.uk; press@ncfq.uk; treasurer@ncfq.uk; secretary@ncfq.uk
Subject: Spectator stand removal from Newbury Football Ground
Date: Saturday, September 22, 2018 12:41:04 AM

Dear [REDACTED]

I am the deputy chair of Newbury Community Football Group and this letter is for your attention, but I have also copied it to other interested parties for openness, clarity and publication (please see cc addresses).

Regarding the application by Hungerford Town FC to demolish the large, seated, covered spectator stand (which has been a permanent structure for around 25 years) at Newbury Football Ground, Faraday Road, please can you read the background and ownership-related statements below and then respond to the questions which follow?

Background

NCFG's primary objective is to save the football ground and retain it for its purpose of organised football matches at the higher levels of league football where a top quality playing surface, pitch & perimeter fencing, floodlights, changing rooms, WCs, clubhouse and spectator stands are required. Removal of the stand greatly reduces the ground's ability to function and is effectively a "change of use". Note that it achieved a higher ground grading than F (National League System step 5) before the council removed the tenant's security of tenure, thus excluding the tenant club from joining high leagues and there is still no planned site development for some years to come.

Ownership

Newbury Town FC had the stand erected before they folded in 1995 after which time the ground assets remained the property of the council.

AFC Newbury FC leased the ground from the council from 1996 until they folded in 2007 and again the ground assets remained in the council's ownership.

Newbury FC leased the ground from 2008 until 2018 and when they were evicted in June, the

ground assets still belonged to the council, as landlord.

The various council's football club leases mention the stand as the landlord's asset.

West Berks Council lists the land and permanent buildings on its asset register.

There has never been any mention of the stand belonging to our NCFG partners Newbury FC in previous correspondence since NCFG formed in late 2015.

Cllr Anthony Pick (chair) at the recent Newbury Town Council planning meeting on 10 September stated that WBC owns the stand.

WBC's Asset of Community Value lists the stand as an integral part of the protected ground, also covered by cultural facility and green infrastructure policies.

WBC's response to NCFG's stage 2 complaint in late August stated that there were no plans to demolish any part of the facility.

The above statement was made round about the same time as HTFC's notification to demolish.

The prior notification in early September by HTFC to demolish suddenly changed on 29 September to no longer needing planning involvement which WBC was fully aware of.

WBC no longer receives rent from NFC and it would appear that WBC is about to sell a protected asset.

Questions

Given the above statements, please can you present proof to NCFG of:

1. who owns the stand and why/how it may have changed hands?
2. who has the authority to allow it to be dismantled and why?
3. who is selling or releasing the stand and for how much?
4. who has been in contact with HTFC, NFC or their representatives regarding the demolition?
5. the council's intent to replace the stand, should it be removed.

We have around 2000 local supporters through our online and paper petitions, around a 100 of whom attended our recent public consultation, who support NCFG's efforts to enhance the ground for future use. They are all voting, West Berks constituents and would be keen to know what the ground's landlord/building owner has to say, as would the Football Association, Sport England and HTFC (who regrettably find themselves in the centre of this controversy).

To conclude, we believe that the stand cannot be touched until these questions have been answered with proper evidence by WBC so, as their main spokesperson on this matter, thank you in anticipation of your timely, full reply.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

NCFG Deputy Chair

www.ncfg.uk

xxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxx.xx

[REDACTED]