

From: xxxxxxxxxx@xxxx.xx
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: WBC's search for a new football ground and demolition of the existing one
Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 8:23:32 PM

Hi [REDACTED],

Thanks for your reply. I've been busy helping my youth football club, hence the delay in responding.

It's very frustrating that West Berks Council is putting many more obstacles in our way compared with our first planning application. Reactions to our first attempt were generally positive, but now we can see they really don't want this. It's more frustrating that we had some errors and some inconsistencies and that you also pointed them out!

For the record, "20/01530/OUT and 20/01966/COMIND - Newbury Football Club, Faraday Road, Newbury" is about the physical ground not the playing club/team.

Planning Application 20/01966/COMIND is to provide a new artificial playing surface at the current Faraday Road football ground. The original Design & Access Statement was submitted in 2018 and we have submitted an updated version that reflects the current plan which is for a main pitch and a small training / practice pitch, both of which will be 3G artificial grass. Any references to 4G and other ancillary sports activities (e.g. cricket nets, hockey etc.) is no longer applicable and has been removed.

Planning Application 20/01530/OUT's original Design & Access Statement was submitted in 2018 and this stated, "it is proposed to provide 4 private parking spaces alongside the public car park that is adjacent to the site". This is still the case and an updated block plan showing these 4 private parking spaces has been submitted.

We were aware of the Environment Agency's objections but were advised that the key requirement was the submission of an Ecology Report (which we have submitted) and that the Flood Risk Assessment would be subject to a planning condition, which is set out in the Case Officer's report dated 17/2/20:, paragraph 6.37, "Whilst the EA see this as a reason for refusal, LLFA Officers are content for the submission of an FRA to be provided by way of a planning condition in these particular circumstances."

A small proportion of the site is located in Flood Zone 2 & 3. However, this application is not for a change of use and the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Flood Zone and flood risk tables states in Table 2 Flood risk vulnerability classification that, "Amenity open space, nature conservation and biodiversity, outdoor sports and recreation and essential facilities such as changing rooms" are water-compatible development.

NCFG is a non-profit Community Interest Company run by a group of dedicated volunteers whose only objective is to protect and enhance all-gender football facilities in Newbury for the community, especially young people. This is a particular focus of the Government's strategy to enhance recreation facilities and thereby wellbeing (especially for the young) in response to Covid-19. It self-evidently accords with the Council's own wellbeing strategy, which similarly has additional emphasis resultant of Covid-19. By its nature, NCFG's finances are very tight and NCFG therefore we were hoping that the LPA might make appropriate allowances. The matter relating to the FRA was subject to full examination by the LPA in the last con-joined

applications and appeals and the position set out in the LPA's final Committee report was common ground in the appeal. The appeal was withdrawn because of a very late objection by the EA about lack of ecological impact evidence, that the LPA rightly concluded could not be secured by a condition. All of the principles applying to the current applications, except ecology, were determined by the LPA as evidenced in the first report recommendation and consequent Committee resolution to approve, and the second report. Other than ecology, which the newly submitted report addresses, no other new factors negatively affect the applications (e.g. new policy) and therefore hopefully the LPA will be able to approve or, should the application go to committee because it affects land owned by the Council and (based on the last applications) is widely supported by the public, then recommend approval.

This is costing us a lot, so our fingers are crossed!

Regards, [REDACTED]

On September 16, 2020 at 7:49:45 am +01:00, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] > wrote:

Good morning [REDACTED]

Sorry for the delay, but we are just coming out of A/L season and so is the rest of the world.

I try and answer your questions.

Sport England have no powers to prevent demolition nor do we have to be notified. This is an on-going issue we have been lobbying to get changed.

Regarding the demolition of the buildings if Sport England had been consulted, I would have asked to see the dilapidations survey and if it meant spending more money than they would get from the hire of the facilities, I may have supported the demolition, the converse is true and I would have objected to the demolition.

However, in this instance the re-provision is committed to in the West

Berks PPS, along with the playing field. I have had a few face to face meetings over this site with the LA, possibly more than any other site in my career at Sport England. I have no reason to dis-believe their commitment to relocate the facilities. In a recent meeting I did raise the management of the new facility which is something they will be addressing.

Thank you for the comments about the interaction between yourselves and West Berks, I am on the outside , a 110 miles away give or take, and only got involved about 4 years ago., whereas, as you point out have been at this for sometime and you are local. I just want to share my experience challenging and then working with a local authority.

I have no doubt the redevelopment will take place as it has gone through due process with planning as has the playing pitch strategy.

Sport England is happy to support the continued use of the existing until the replacement site is operational. However we will be unlikely to commit funding to it.

I have just commented on your recent planning application which was flawed and confusing on a number of fronts, which I don't think helps your case. I am attaching a copy of my response.

Please note you will not get public money unless you have a long term lease of the property affected.

I have seen your passion and commitment over this and I am sorry I am unable to match it on this site.

Take care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] RIBA MRTPI Principal Planning Manager - South Team T: [REDACTED] M: [REDACTED]

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From: deputychair@ncfg.uk <deputychair@ncfg.uk>

Sent: 09 September 2020 21:43

To: [REDACTED] >

Cc: ' <chair@ncfg.uk>; 'NCFG' <press@ncfg.uk>; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: WBC's search for a new football ground and demolition of the existing one

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for getting back to me (it's [REDACTED] but he's copied in). I've considered your comments and have a few more of my own and some questions (in *italics*), if I may?

Your statement on the demolition of existing buildings does not sound like my understanding of your playing pitches policy. On that basis, as is the case here, a facility could be lost on the mere commitment to re-provision sometime in the future. Demolition is an act of development and so requires planning permission according to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 55. *Surely prior re-provision of the ground is required here and an objection (or at least a warning) could be lodged?*

We all welcome the belated PPS, and thank you for persevering with the council, especially as they blamed SE for the delays in its publication! (we believe otherwise). However, there appears to be one big omission from the adopted document - there is **no time frame** for the ground's replacement. We are currently left with this hiatus of no ground, so far, for over 2 years!

In the PPS the timescales and priorities criteria are laid out in:

4.3.4 Action plan terminology

76. Timescale: Short: 0–2 yrs. Medium: 2-5 yrs. Long 5-10 yrs.

77. Priority: Low, Medium and High, depending on overall impact for sports participation

Priorities also mentioned here:

4.4 Priority List and Sport Specific Site Action Plan

4.4.1 The initial action plan addresses the top 10 priorities (Table 4.1) and sites within West Berkshire that are a high priority across all sports. Sport specific action plans then follow for other sites per sport (Table 4.2 to 4.4). Please note, to avoid duplication the top 10 site priorities are not replicated in the sport specific action plan section.

BUT...

Table 4.1 Top 10

No Timing

heading referring to 4.3.4 – 76 (these are the important WBC-owned venues)

Table 4.2 Action Plan

Has Timing & priority columns, as 4.3.4 - 76 & 77 (these are the partner venues)

Is this still an incomplete draft version? Can it be rectified? Are there milestones when you will check with WBC for progress? Knowing the council as we do, we think this might be a loophole their number one priority could slip through. While we wait for an alternative ground to become available, would you support re-opening Faraday Road until firm dates are set?

You have to remember that for the last 10 years at least this council has avoided committing to a PPS and has wanted rid of the ground without replacing it. Indeed, your SE predecessors warned them about this in 2014. The Chief Executive also insisted previously to us they had no obligation to replace the existing football ground in Faraday Road (when they did!).

I admire your optimism about the PPS holding WBC to replacing the ground and can understand why you may be reluctant to object to any demolition planning applications, but you should also concede that we have valid reasons for being more skeptical. Therefore we would urge you to warn the council not to slow down the replacement ground process as you are closely monitoring the situation – we are relying on SE to police this. Please don't let their commitment to the PPS kid you into thinking they'll definitely deliver it.

Of course, we will be objecting to the demolition of the existing club house and changing rooms because they are part of our ACV and we feel the council owes us back the ground they took away and should do what they can to make up for the damage they have done to local football aspirations over the last 10 years.

Regarding an "existing sports ground" being chosen and a possible planning case being made, unsurprisingly, we haven't got too much from WBC. *Are you able to tell us what's been discussed with them so far?*

We have offered the council partnership on numerous occasions and every time we start a dialogue the council's Executive steps in and deters its councilors and officers from engaging with us, typically [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who we had a productive meeting with over 18 months ago and since then no return meetings as promised to discuss local football requirements or the PPS launch. [REDACTED] has also pulled out of two Newbury Town Council meetings. The current portfolio holder for health and wellbeing Howard Woollaston, who has been more approachable than others, asked us to send him our proposals for a cost-effective plan to bring Faraday Road back to step 7 with a view to using it in the interim while the London Road Industrial Estate master plan becomes real (or not). After hours of collating the material and submitting the details he ignored it and later flatly refused to discuss the reopening of the ground! Nor has the council shared a copy of the 3 alternative football ground surveys by Surfacing Standards Ltd or the condition survey reports on the ground when it closed in June 2018 (before they let it become derelict). Now they are dismantling it bit-by-bit and you wonder why we aren't happy with them! *Have you followed up with WBC, seen the SSL report and are you able to share it with us?*

I should point out that NCFG has spent lots of time, effort and money over the past 5 years in ensuring that a much valued sports facility that has needlessly been taken away from the local community if not forgotten, and yes, this has included us exploring alternative venues. I very much hope something good comes of this new ground but we could have told WBC 10 years ago that options for alternative sites in Newbury were limited. If we had the money and land we would have done something about it! If the Council had done what they should have done and kept the ground open until a replacement was operational then our group would not have needed to exist. As it is, we will continue to lobby for the re-opening of the

ground for organised football matches until a firm solution is operational and we hope SE and the FA will support us with this aim.

In my opinion, this is not the traditional, altruistic, cash-strapped council which means well and collaborates in partnership with its constituents on community sporting matters. This is a council hell bent on fulfilling its aspirational vision without consultation and evidence of need and never every admits any mistakes or wrong doing. There are some good officers and councillors but they are constantly being silenced by the powerful Executive which is extremely frustrating.

We are not fighting them at every stage; we just remind them of their obligations to their own local and everyone's national rules, pointing out when they contravene them (they probably don't like this). We have said we welcome any new like-for-like ground but they should have stuck to their own strategies and policies and replaced the existing one before closing the old one. We know we are right and they are stubbornly sticking to their wrong decision.

For the moment, our position is:

We have a live planning application in place for a new 3G artificial turf facility and club house to prove to the public that a football ground on the Faraday Road site is possible. Why does WBC exclude the option of retaining the football ground at its current location as a back-up or even as a "plan B"? We have submitted a legitimate planning application that we trust/hope SE will support and if the Council does not come up with an alternative facility, ours becomes the default feasible option.

We will back any genuine, viable and deliverable proposal for a new or replacement facility but not support keeping the current ground closed or turning it into a "general recreational area". There is no evidence of need or justification for this type of facility when there is a shortage of top quality pitches for good footballers to develop. There is no logic or community benefit in destroying a football stadium to create a grassed area, with no toilets, changing rooms or the ability to book in advance, especially when all these things existed before. Why are the Council still making decisions behind closed doors and without any evidence? What is required is a first-class football pitch in a graded, quality ground that can be used by FA-affiliated clubs from the whole community. That's what all the evidence points to and what the PPS clearly states.

We gladly support the PPS plans if they provide the community football facilities that Newbury needs on the basis that the existing ground is re-opened until the new football facility is open for use. Remember, the recent announcement is very similar to the poorly planned MUGA one made in March 2019.

NCFG's position remains unchanged and we are still happy to engage with the council and all parties in finding short, medium and long-term solutions, but we need to feel that we are being listened to, that we (as representatives of the local football community) can make a difference and at least some suggestions that we provide are rationally considered, respected and acted upon by the council.

We are the volunteer amateurs here and we rely on and need the full support of professional sporting bodies such as SE and the FA to ensure that our sports facilities are protected and enhanced.

And finally, you are absolutely right, bureaucracy and administration tend to wear us all down after a while (especially in this part of the world)!

Thanks & regards, [REDACTED]
NCFG Deputy Chair

On August 27, 2020 at 7:39:16 am +01:00, [REDACTED]
<[REDACTED]> wrote:

Good morning [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email, I'm very well thank you.

In answer to your questions in turn:

1. The proposed demolition will not trigger an automatic objection because there is a commitment in the Playing pitch Strategy to replace facilities when the site is relocated in the future;
2. The change of title to recreational space does not constitute a change of use under the SI 2020 no 747 Town and Country Planning (use Classes) Amendment (England) Regulations 2020; and
3. If an existing sports ground was chosen a planning case would have to be made. This has been discussed with WBC.

Can I too please ask a question?

Given the site is to be redeveloped, why hasn't your group worked with WDC to identify a suitable site? Or identified a site on your own. Forgive me for referring to King Cnut, but surely it would be better for the game and community if you worked with the WDC rather than fight them at every stage?

When my local library system was facing closures and reduced hours across the board, I organised a borough wide network of groups and while we fought the closures etc we worked with library staff and were able to put forward a more sustainable business/usage plan which was adopted by Sandwell MBC. I delivered it full council – the first non-officer ever invited to do so. The work we did in the 1990s has ensured even today that the service has not been cut, but had new libraries opened. As a result of this, I spoke nationally at events on libraries and was even on the front page of the Guardian's educational supplement. I only had to step down when I joined Sport England, as they would have been a conflict of interest.

I feel if you could harness your passion to work with the WDC a suitable solution would come quicker as this is one of many

projects the officers have to work on.

I do understand your frustration, but ultimately I believe involved wants the same thing, unfortunately bureaucracy and administration tend to wear us all down after a while.

Take care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] RIBA MRTPI Principal Planning Manager - South Team T:

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From: deputychair@ncfg.uk <deputychair@ncfg.uk>

Sent: 26 August 2020 22:43

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED] <chair@ncfg.uk>; 'NCFG' <press@ncfg.uk>

Subject: WBC's search for a new football ground and demolition of the existing one

Hi [REDACTED]

I hope all is well with you.

West Berks Council has issued a press release to local media which

poses some questions we'd like to ask you please.

The text reads:

Until redevelopment of the London Road Industrial Estate begins, a new temporary open space will be created on the site of the former Faraday Road sports ground. The recreational space will be provided for community use only until the land is required for regeneration. Work is due to begin this autumn with the creation of an area of grass surrounded by a rail and hard surface. It is expected to open in Spring 2021. Before work can safely begin, contractors will be appointed to demolish a derelict clubhouse on the site which is in a dangerous condition and beyond repair. Contractors will be appointed and will submit an application for demolition in the coming weeks.

West Berkshire Council is also looking at options to build a new football facility in the Newbury area. Consultants have completed a feasibility study of three possible sites on land owned by the Council, and the Council is also looking at other options working with partners to deliver a new facility. This will create a new sports provision in the area, providing somewhere for Newbury Football Club to play home games as well as being available for wider community use. It is hoped that further details about potential sites will be released in the autumn.

We've not seen the Surfacing Standards Ltd report into the 3 WBC-owned alternatives (Henwick Worthy, Northcroft, Pigeons Farm 'Diamond') yet, but our local paper reported that it stated none were suitable alternatives for Step 7/6/5 football. We're waiting to hear more about any additional non-WBC-owned venues.

The questions we have for you are:

Does this proposed demolition of part of our ACV require planning and would that trigger an automatic SE objection?

Does this proposed creation of a recreational space constitute a change of use and would that trigger an automatic SE objection?

If an existing sports ground, rather than a new site, were to be used for a replacement facility, would this would fall foul of SE guidelines and would you object when it came to a planning application? i.e. if an existing sports pitch was used as a replacement football ground then this would represent a net loss of at least one sports pitch (Faraday Road) and possibly the loss of the existing pitch's former use (e.g. Henwick Worthy has its fields marked out for rugby and football).

Thanks & regards,

[REDACTED]

Deputy Chair

Newbury Community Football Group

[REDACTED]

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