

11 June 2021



Nick Bitel  
Chairman, Sport England

**Leader of the Council**

West Berkshire Council  
Council Offices  
Market Street Newbury  
Berkshire RG14 5LD

Sent via email

**Our Ref:** Id/rab

**Your Ref:**

**Please ask for:** Lynne Doherty

**Direct Line:** 01635 519652

**e-mail:**

lynne.doherty@westberks.gov.uk

Dear Mr Bitel

To set what follows into context, this Council has been progressing the regeneration and development of a strategic planning site in Newbury called the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) for some years. For contractual reasons, this resulted in the closure of the Faraday Road Sports ground in 2018.

Coincident with this we developed a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (which was part funded and supported by Sports England (SE)), and more recently we are in the process of finalising an agreement for lease with Newbury Rugby Club (NRC) with a view to developing a combined, all weather, rugby and football (Step 4) venue.


Our stated ambition in line with the PPS, and associated development route (via a joint user agreement with NRC), is to have the venue ready for March 2022 in time to enable local football teams to register this venue as their home venue and thereby meet the FA registration date of 31st March.

In anticipation we have been speaking to SE throughout the process – specifically with regards to our PPS that was approved in February 2020. In all those discussions SE has been wholly supportive of our ambition with the strategy which explicitly states that a new facility and pitch will be established to replace the Faraday Road stadium to deal with the deficit issue and we remain committed to this.

It was therefore more than a surprise to receive the recent negative response from SE that raised issues that had not been raised before and which, if accepted, would mean that the March 2022 date would be unachievable. The introduction of the concept of three conjoined planning applications is wholly unacceptable and indicates SE has failed to grasp the practicalities of what we are trying to accomplish. In particular, the idea that the clubhouse demolition at LRIE should be subject to a Unilateral Undertaking for the replacement of the stadium at NRC is not acceptable to the Council, not least because it will substantially delay the Council's ability to reopen the Faraday Road as a playing field for the general public.

Rather than bat these issues back and forth, I am proposing a meeting (asap) between this Council and SE to seek to clarify thoughts and these matters ahead of the submission of the planning application for the new sports development at NRC. I should be grateful if you could give urgent consideration to this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LD' or 'Lynne Doherty', followed by a period.

**Lynne Doherty**  
**Leader of the Council**

cc Charles Johnston, Executive Director Property