



## **Save Brandon Stadium Supporters Group – Representations to the Rugby Borough Emerging Local Plan - The Preferred Option - December 2015**

### **Introduction:**

The Save Brandon Stadium Supporters Group (SBSG) was formed in late 2014 in response to proposals to demolish Brandon Stadium and build housing on the site. The SBSG brings together supporters of both Speedway and Stock Car Racing which have been and continue to be the two principal sports using the stadium over many decades. The development proposals appear to be an aggressive manoeuvre to extract development value from the site with little or no recognition of the importance of the sporting activities or heritage of the stadium – for which there is a strong and continuing need.

National policy requires that replacement provision is required in the event that such a facility and activity is redeveloped but this appears to have been dismissed by those proposing the redevelopment. In this day and age it is inconceivable that an owner of an established Football, Rugby or Cricket League Ground would be permitted to act in such a way and it is our belief that a similar principle should apply in relation to such an important facility such as Brandon Stadium which is of acknowledged national and international importance.

Users of the stadium have been told that the stadium has been sold and will close in November 2016 but the SBSG believes this to be an arbitrary deadline concocted to force through early redevelopment and should be seen as an attempt to disconnect consideration of the housing proposals with any issues relating to replacement provision. This is wrong.

There is a proposal emerging for a new stadium, proposed by Avtar Sandhu (who purchased the stadium in 2003) and Jeremy Heaver, the current promoters of the car racing at the stadium (and former owner of the speedway rights), to build a new, replacement stadium nearby. The site of this proposal has not yet been revealed. SBSG assumes this will happen as part of representations on the local plan.

In the event that Rugby Borough Council and other relevant authorities support the provision of the replacement stadium then that proposal would receive the full support of the SBSG assuming it is fully funded and could be regarded as a genuine equivalent replacement to Brandon Stadium and does not lead to a break in racing. Until this point is reached, however, there is no choice but to seek to ensure Brandon Stadium is protected

from redevelopment and a suggested form of words for possible inclusion in the local plan is set out below.

The SBSG remains highly concerned at the threatened closure of the existing stadium after the 2016 racing season and therefore wishes to request that Rugby Borough Council consider the urgent designation of the entire Brandon Stadium site as a Conservation Area. This is the approach that has recently been taken to protect the speedway/greyhound stadium in Oxford, an approach that has now received support through a High Court challenge. A copy of the document for the Conservation Area designation at the Oxford Stadium is attached as a supporting document to the representation.

The SBSG also wished to put on record its support for the designation of entire Brandon Stadium site as an Asset of Community Value. It is understood an application for such a designation has been submitted by the local community.

Also attached to this representation is a short document briefly setting out the rich heritage of Brandon Stadium. It is considered this represents an important document helping to set out what we consider is a very strong case for retention of the Speedway and Stock Car Racing either at the existing stadium or in a new facility should that become the Council's preferred approach.

### **Rugby Development Plan**

Proposed form of words for Rugby Borough Council to consider for possible inclusion as part of the review of the local plan.

### **Policy: Brandon Stadium and Community Hub**

**Brandon Stadium is an important venue of national and international significance for motorsport providing the home for Speedway since 1928 (the stadium hosts two teams: Coventry Bees and Coventry Storm) and Stock Car Racing since 1954. As such the stadium will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced to ensure it endures as a motorsports venue attracting users and spectators locally, regionally and from wider afield contributing significantly to the local economy.**

**There is potential for limited intensification, on non-event days and, diversification in the uses that take place on the site and proposals which are both complementary and ancillary to the main use and/or provide services supporting the local community. Such proposals will be favourably considered subject to the continuing Green Belt designation of the stadium site and that the proposals both individually or combined do not lead to a significant increase in traffic impacting on either the A428 Rugby Road or its junction with the A46.**

The entire stadium site should also be identified on the Policies Map.

### Supporting text:

The importance of Brandon Stadium as a motorsports venue is recognised and the Rugby Development Plan will support the continued operation of the venue. The policy also recognises that the stadium site has potential to accommodate additional activities which could help underpin the viability of the main use as well as potential to meet the on-going needs of the local community. This is the preferred approach.

For clarity, in the event of proposals for the redevelopment of the site emerging which would involve demolition and/or discontinuance of the stadium use, then the approach to be followed would only be to consider such development subject to equivalent or better quantity and quality replacement sports provision elsewhere within Rugby Borough, or through negotiation under the Duty to Co-operate within the wider area. It is reasonable to anticipate the proceeds which might be realised in the event of redevelopment would help facilitate the alternative replacement provision.

The approach towards Brandon Stadium is consistent with national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

### Other observations on the Rugby Local Plan and the evidence base.

The SBSG highlight the following:

1. Portrait of Rugby: the SBSG considers this section would be strengthened by reference to Brandon Stadium as the biggest sports facility in the borough, its most important single tourist attraction and an important contributor to the local economy.
2. Spatial Objective 2: to suggest an amendment to read as follows: "Enhance the quality of **outdoor and** indoor **sport, leisure, recreation and cultural** facilities within the Borough and **to** ensure residents have access to ~~good outdoor leisure and recreation facilities through the development of a~~ **the developing** green infrastructure network throughout the Borough."
3. To support the identification of Binley Woods as a 'Main Rural Settlement' subject to the housing growth proposals ensuring the continuity of Speedway and Stock Car Racing.
4. In relation to Policy SD3 Previously Developed Land to make the observation that much of the Brandon Stadium facility cannot be considered a brownfield site, as is the contention of the prospective developers.
5. Policy ED4 The wider urban and rural economy. This policy could usefully refer to Brandon Stadium which is an important driver to the local economy, for example in generating overnight stays. This could be achieved through an amendment on the following lines; "a) ~~Small-scale~~ tourism, visitor accommodation and leisure based

uses, including sport and recreation ***(such as Brandon Stadium)***, particularly those which would help to provide local employment and support rural services.”

6. Under the provisions of Policy SDC3: Protecting and enhancing the Historic Environment the SBSG request that Rugby Borough Council consider designation of Brandon Stadium as a Heritage Asset, preferably as a Conservation Area (see above) or as a Locally Listed Building.
7. To note that the Open Space Audit, while examining the need for sports in the Borough fails to recognise the activities that take place at Brandon Stadium. This point is made because the audit claims to cover outdoor sports facilities.

Prepared by the Save Brandon Stadium Supporters Group

18 February 2016