



Save Brandon Stadium Supporters Group – Representations to the Rugby Borough Council Publication Draft Local Plan - October 2016

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 appeared 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 were told that the stadium had been sold and would close in November 2016 but the SBSG believed this to be an arbitrary deadline concocted in an attempt to force through early redevelopment and to disconnect consideration of the housing proposals with any issues relating to replacement provision. This is wrong.

Since SBSG made representations on the consultation draft version of the local the Borough Council have intervened securing an extension of racing at the existing stadium for three years while a replacement facility is brought forward. As yet, however, no replacement site has been identified, and crucially the alternative site is not identified in the emerging local plan.

In the event that Rugby Borough Council and other relevant authorities support the provision of a replacement stadium then that proposal would receive the full and active support of the SBSG assuming it is (1) fully funded, (2) it provides a genuine equivalent replacement to Brandon Stadium, (3) has the full support of Rugby Borough Council including the designation of the new site within this emerging local plan and (4) permits a

smooth and unbroken transition of the racing from Brandon into the new facility. 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 to this effect is set out below.

The SBSG remains highly concerned at the threatened closure of the existing stadium and in February 2016 requested 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 this representation as this remains one way forward.

The SBSG also expressed its support for the designation of entire Brandon Stadium site as an Asset of Community Value. An initial application for such a designation was turned down by the Borough Council but the SBSG understood, following discussion at the public meeting held in May 2016, that this decision was to be revisited.

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 to be reflected (presumably through modifications) to the local plan.

The SBSG considers that emerging local plan is unsound unless its concerns about Brandon Stadium are addressed and cannot be considered to be positively prepared, justified, effective nor consistent with national policy.

Rugby Development Plan

Proposed form of words for inclusion as part of the local plan.

New Policy: Brandon Stadium and Community Hub [suggested location within Chapter 4 of the plan]

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.

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. It is reasonable to anticipate the proceeds which might be realised in the event of redevelopment would help facilitate the alternative replacement provision.

Should development proposals emerge on part of the existing site then these would only be permitted subject to (i) retention of the stadium for motorsports in the long term and (ii) for some of the proceeds from the development being utilised for stadium improvements.

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.

The approach set out in the policy suggests how proposals for the complete or partial redevelopment of the site would be approached.

The approach towards Brandon Stadium is consistent with national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and recognises the significance of the venue to the local economy.

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

The SBSG highlight the following:

1. The section on the local economy (starting at para 2.13) should refer to Brandon Stadium since this is one of the most important tourist facilities within the Borough and the only active motorsport venue within the Warwickshire part of the motorsport cluster known as motorsports valley.
2. To support (in Policy GP2) 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.

3. Para 3.15 – to note that the development of a new stadium in the event of the demolition of Brandon Stadium would almost certainly involve development in the Green Belt. This would either require the site to be excluded from the Green Belt or for the stadium use to be regarded as being capable of being ‘washed over’ as is the case with the existing stadium.
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. Also to request that an amendment is made to the third bullet point of Policy GP3 so it reads, “ The impact on any heritage, **sports, cultural** or biodiversity assets.
5. SBSG note that the site of Brandon Stadium is not identified to meet the objectively assessment of development needs for either housing or employment development.
6. 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.”
7. 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.
8. 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.