

**From:** [Rajvir Bahey](#)  
**To:** [Erica Buchanan](#)  
**Subject:** Coventry Stadium SE comments  
**Date:** 27 April 2018 18:58:11

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Dear Erica Buchanan,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

### **Sport England – Non Statutory Role and Policy**

As the site is not currently a playing field and has not been used as a playing field for the last 5 years, I can advise that Sport England are not a statutory consultee on for this development. However, as the development would affect a motor sports facility, Sport England have provided additional comments following consideration of consultations comments made to the planning application.

Sport England assesses this type of application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and against its own planning objectives, which are Protect - To protect the right opportunities in the right places; Enhance - To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision; Provide - To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations. Further information on the objectives and Sport England's wider planning guidance can be found on its website:

<http://www.sportengland.org/planningforsport>

### **The Proposal and Assessment against Sport England's Objectives and the NPPF**

The proposal entails the demolition of the existing Coventry Stadium and outline planning permission for residential development of up to 137 dwellings. The Stadium has not been in use since the end of 2016 but prior to this it was primarily home to Coventry Bees Speedway team and Coventry Stox, alongside occasional greyhound racing use.

The submitted Planning Statement acknowledges that NPPF para 74 is relevant to the proposal but highlights that the requirement to undertake an assessment to demonstrate the building is surplus to requirement should be based on proportionate evidence base (NPPF page 38) including consideration as to 'ensuring viability and deliverability' (NPPF para 173).

The Planning Statement states that the buildings are surplus to requirement and that the stadium is not commercially viable as demonstrated by the applicants viability assessment. In relation to the stadium being surplus to requirement the applicant highlights that Coventry Bees Speedway team are now sharing facilities with Leicester Lions Speedway at the Leicester Speedway Stadium; Coventry Racing Club Limited's stockcar had moved events to Stoke Stadium in 2017 and the operators have subsequently announced that their operations will cease for 2018 and 2019 season (at least) whilst venue and financial arrangements are addressed; and the company who held the Greyhound licence to hold events at the stadium dissolved in December 2015. Therefore the stadium has no licence holders proposing to hold events at the stadium leaving it without an operational purpose.

In relation to the commercial viability of the Stadium the applicants viability assessment highlights there is no plausible commercial basis upon which Coventry Stadium would be reopened when taking account of the following; historic and forecasted financial trading of the stadium; the costs of reinstating the stadium following substantial damage; and no licence holders willing to hold motor racing events at the stadium leaving the stadium without a business case for

### reopening or operational purpose.

The Planning Statement also states that the applicant has received several enquiries from parties interested in either acquiring or operating Coventry Stadium since its original purchase but no parties who were seeking re-use the facilities demonstrated a credible business case or professional team to operate the stadium or have failed to provide suitable evidence of funds to either operate or acquire the subject site and premises.

It is on the above basis that the applicant considers that the requirements of NPPF para 74 has been met.

In viewing the consultation responses from the governing bodies who have used the stadium the importance of the Stadium to the respective sports are apparent. ACU the governing body for motorcycle sports response highlighted that the stadium was home to Coventry Bees speedway team since 1948 up until recently, with the stadium hosting a number of British and World championship events. The British Stock Car Association (BSCA) response highlighted that the Coventry Stadium has been central to sport since 1954 with it regularly hosting major titles. The BSCA also commented that they continue to support the stockcar operator, Coventry Racing Club which was always a viable operation, whilst pursuing the return to racing to the area. BSCA also assisted the club to relocate fixtures elsewhere in 2017. Consultation comments submitted by Saved Brandon Speedway and Stox Campaign, highlight a number of concerns about statements contained within the applicants viability statements which conflict with the applicants case that the stadium surplus to requirement, not commercially viable and that there no interested bodies willing to acquire the stadium for its current use. Such comments include that the Coventry Bees Speedway teams move to Leicester is only for a single season, therefore it is possible that the team could return to the stadium alongside Stockcar racing, deemed a viable eternity and which BSCA are still supporting to bring racing to the area, for which a number of interested bodies approached the applicant to purchase / lease the site for such use.

### **Conclusion**

Given the above it is considered that the points raised by Save Brandon Speedway and Stox Campaign pertinent to NPPF para 74 should be clarified (and where necessitated reflected in an updated viability assessment) by the applicant to assist the case officer in reaching a decision as to whether the Stadium is surplus to requirement or not.

If you would like any further information or advice please contact me at the address below.

If this application is to be presented to a Planning Committee, Sport England would like to be notified in advance of the meeting date(s) and the publication of any agenda(s) and report(s). Sport England would also like to be notified of the outcome of the application through the receipt of a copy of the decision notice.

Yours sincerely,

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Sport England

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