



**OBJECTIONS SUBMITTED ON PLANNING APPLICATION N° R18/0186 BY THE SAVE COVENTRY SPEEDWAY AND STOX CAMPAIGN – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

<b>Planning Application N°:</b>	<b>Site Address:</b>	<b>Description of the proposal:</b>
R18/0186	COVENTRY STADIUM RUGBY ROAD COVENTRY WARWICKSHIRE CV8 3GJ	Demolition of existing buildings and outline planning application for residential development of up to 137 dwellings (Use Class C3) including means of access from the Rugby Road, new open space and associated infrastructure. All other matters reserved.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign is an umbrella grouping of people who wish to see the long heritage of Speedway and Stock Car Racing in Coventry / Rugby continue, and be returned to the iconic Brandon (aka Coventry) Stadium as soon as possible.

The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign wishes to place on record the strongest possible objections to Planning Application R18/0186, which would result in the loss and redevelopment of Brandon Stadium. The grounds of objections are as follows:

1. The proposals are directly contrary to the provisions of both the existing development plan (the Core Strategy, adopted 2011) and its emerging review (the Rugby Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031, Publication Draft, September 2016).
2. The housing proposals conflict with the Green Belt designation of the site.
3. The housing proposals are contrary to the provisions of national planning policy, which seeks to protect sports facilities from development.
4. 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' and 'Planning for Growth' provide no grounds to support the housing proposals.

5. Brandon Stadium was, and remains, a viable use for the site.
6. Brandon Stadium remains the best site for Speedway and Stock Car Racing in Rugby Borough, and the failure of the owners in their obligations to secure the site is the only reason that has led to significant damage to the buildings since January 2017.
7. Brandon Stadium has a rich and long heritage reaching back to 1928 which should be treasured and protected.
8. The redevelopment of Brandon Stadium will result in the destruction of one of the most important tourist facilities in Rugby Borough.
9. The applicants have failed to demonstrate the viability of their proposals.
10. The proposals are premature and should be considered through the Development Plan process.
11. The Sustainability Appraisal and associated background material accompanying the planning application is deficient and does not provide sufficient basis to support the new housing proposals.

In the following report and accompanying appendices we set out the reasoned and measured arguments in support of each of the above objections. We believe that the grounds of objection outlined above against Brandon Estates' aggressive and predatory housing proposals are weighty, and present a compelling case for planning permission for the redevelopment of Brandon Stadium for new housing to be refused.

***The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign accordingly and respectfully calls upon Rugby Borough Council to embrace the long and rich sporting heritage to reject the planning application which would lead to the loss of one of the most iconic sports stadiums in the country.***

***In the – hopefully unlikely - event that Rugby Borough Council might be persuaded to look favourably on residential development on the site of Brandon Stadium, the Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign would strongly urge the current planning application to be refused, with the applicant being advised that they should only re-apply subject to the obligation to provide an alternative replacement stadium of comparable quality being proposed for consideration in tandem.***

***Finally, we note that Rugby Borough Council's Corporate Strategy 2017-20 strapline is 'Proud of our past, fit for the future.' We respectfully call upon them to apply this principle when making their decision on this planning application.***



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**THE SAVE COVENTRY SPEEDWAY AND STOX CAMPAIGN**

The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign is an umbrella grouping of people who wish to see the long heritage of Speedway and Stock Car Racing at Brandon (aka Coventry) Stadium continue.

The objective of forming this Campaign Group was to identify a clear vision, avoid duplication of effort, and co-ordinate activities to achieve that vision in a structured manner. That vision is to see the return of both Speedway and Stock Car Racing back to Coventry / Rugby, at the iconic Brandon Stadium as soon as possible.

Further information on the Campaign Group can be found in Appendix 1.

## **GROUNDINGS OF OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign wishes to place on record the strongest possible objections to the proposals submitted by Framptons on behalf of Brandon Estates which would result in the loss and redevelopment of Brandon Stadium. The grounds of objections are as follows:

**1. The proposals are directly contrary to the provisions of both the existing development plan (the Core Strategy, adopted 2011) and its emerging review (the Rugby Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031, Publication Draft, September 2016).**

- 1.1 The Core Strategy carries forward the existing Green Belt designation on the Brandon Stadium site, and the Development Strategy set out in Policy CS1 clearly limits new housing growth at Binley Woods to that which can be contained within the existing village boundary which also happens to be the boundary of the Green Belt<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 The policy also states that within the Green Belt, *“New development will be resisted; only where national policy on Green Belt allows will development be permitted.”* This excludes housing.
- 1.3 It is clear, therefore, that the proposed development is 100 per cent contrary to the provisions of the adopted development plan. It is noted that the applicants list a number of policies they consider ‘relevant’ (para 5.6 and 5.7 of their Planning Statement, Doc Ref: PF/918) but the reality is that these are all trumped by Policy CS1 and the associated Green Belt designation of the site as shown on the Proposals Map.
- 1.4 The normal course of action for any developer wishing to change Green Belt designation would be to propose this through the next review of the development plan. Representations on behalf of Brandon Estates seeking residential development on the stadium site (for ‘some 250 dwellings’) have been submitted as part of consultation on the local plan review (the Rugby Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031).
- 1.5 Rugby Borough Council have decided not to support those representations leaving the stadium site within the Green Belt and unallocated as a site suitable for new housing. The public examination into the local plan review commenced on 23 January 2018 and remains ongoing.
- 1.6 Policy GP2 of the local plan review effectively carries forward the provisions of the Core Strategy, limiting growth at Binley Woods within the settlement boundary and retaining Green Belt designation on the site of Brandon Stadium.
- 1.7 Provision for a new housing site at Binley Woods is made, however, through a modest relaxation of the Binley Woods village boundary under Policy DS3.6, for 62 new dwellings on land at Sherwood Farm, Binley Woods. The Sherwood Farm proposal represents the

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<sup>1</sup> Brandon Stadium lies within Brandon Ward but close to the ‘Main Rural Settlement’ of Binley Woods. The village of Brandon lies further away from the stadium site and is defined as a lower tier settlement within the settlement hierarchy.

contribution of Binley Woods towards meeting the overall housing requirement for the Borough.

1.8 Proposals elsewhere in the Borough are made in the plan to ensure that the overall housing requirement will be met.

1.9 It is also necessary to point out that Brandon Estates' case for the new housing as part of their representations on the local plan review is that their site should be allocated in preference to opportunities preferred by the Borough Council. In other words, they simply seek to transfer the new housing from someone else's land onto their own. This means that there would be a zero-sum gain arising from the new housing provision through redevelopment of Brandon Stadium.

1.10 In summary, therefore, both the existing development plan and its review provide no policy basis for the development of new housing on the site of Brandon Stadium.

## **2. The housing proposals conflict with the Green Belt designation of the site.**

2.1 The general extent of the West Midlands Green Belt was initially put forward in the mid-1950s, but it was not until the mid-1970s that the extent of Green Belt coverage in Warwickshire was confirmed by the Secretary of State through his approval of the Warwickshire Structure Plan.

2.2 Detailed Green Belt boundaries were initially defined through the Warwickshire Green Belt Subject Plan in the early 1980's.

2.3 This chronology is important because the Green Belt designation of the stadium site took place after almost all the existing buildings on the site, including the main grandstand and covered terracing, had been constructed.

2.4 This confirms the suitability of Green Belt coverage since only a very small proportion of the site area is occupied by buildings, with the remainder effectively comprising a sports pitch (the track and infield area) together with extensive open areas of ground used for parking by both visitors and competitors (the pit areas) on event days.

2.5 The Campaign Group would, therefore, challenge the applicant's view that the whole of the site is brownfield because of the very low coverage of buildings. Even if that assertion were to be considered correct, however, the Green Belt location is entirely suitable given that the activities carried out at the stadium comprise noisy sports which are more appropriately located in a rural rather than urban setting.

2.6 Where land is proposed for release from the Green Belt as part of the local plan review, this has followed on from the outcome of Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Green Belt Review (2015). This is highlighted since the site of Brandon Stadium is wholly included within the Green Belt within Broad Area 2 of the Part One Green Belt Study.

2.7 We believe that the application proposal directly conflicts with the objectives of Green Belt

and in particular the first objective, *“To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas”*, the third objective, *“To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”*, and the fifth objective, *“To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

2.8 The applicants also appear to suggest that a housing estate of 137 dwellings could be built within the Green Belt. We totally reject this argument as it is at odds with the purpose of the Green Belt.

2.9 The argument appears to be based on a comparison of the footprints of the existing and proposed uses, but as stated above the stadium buildings only occupy a small proportion of the site area whereas the proposed housing estate would occupy a much greater proportion of the site having a significant additional urbanising impact, particularly on the openness of the site and views across it.

2.10 Furthermore, in designing a development they feel is compatible with its Green Belt status the applicants propose a form of development that would form an ‘island’ separated from the existing pattern of development. If national guidelines on the redrawing of Green Belt boundaries were to be followed, through the local plan review process, it is highly unlikely that the form of development proposed would be taken forward, not least because the development would not have defensible boundaries - thus opening up the risk of further development at a later date.

2.11 In summary, we believe there are compelling reasons for the planning application to be rejected because of its adverse impact on Green Belt.

### **3. The housing proposals are contrary to the provisions of national planning policy, which seeks to protect sports facilities from development.**

3.1 The redevelopment of sports facilities for which there is a clearly identified and continuing need should only be permitted when alternative facilities of at least equivalent quality have been provided.

3.2 Paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework states:

*“Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

- *An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.”*

It is clear that the applicants have failed against this national policy, in every respect.

- 3.3 Brandon Stadium is one of the premier venues for Speedway and Stock Car Racing in the UK, hosting events of local, national and international importance.
- 3.4 In the case of Stock Car Racing it is regarded as the sport's equivalent of Wembley Stadium, and the Coventry Bees Speedway team – which has always raced in the top tier of British Speedway - have been left without a track in their locality upon which to race. This situation is one which would be difficult to envisage in other circumstances.
- 3.5 As a Campaign Group we do not accept that the temporary relocation of a third (bottom) tier Speedway team to Leicester is anything but a stop-gap and could never be seen as a permanent solution. We refute the assertions of the applicants in paragraph 6.36 of the Planning Statement, which argues that Leicester (27 miles away) is actually a better-located stadium for Coventry to race at than Brandon. We also point out that the Coventry Speedway agreement with Leicester is a one-year deal only, and is a stadium rental deal rather than a track-share.
- 3.6 Coventry's events for BriSCA F1 Stock Cars have been lost from the calendar and from 2018 will not be transferred (in 2017 only four of the Coventry regular fixtures were held at other stadiums). The impact of Coventry's closure has been damaging to both sports.
- 3.7 If Brandon Estates wish to redevelop the existing stadium it is clear they should only do so in the event that appropriate alternative facilities have been put in place. This would, rightly, place both substantial planning (in finding an appropriate site) and financial (in providing funding for the alternative) burdens on their development proposals. No proposal to satisfy the requirement of paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework has been made.
- 3.8 The tactics employed by Brandon Estates to ensure the sports activities were terminated after the 2016 season does nothing to alter the position on their obligations. If planning permission were to be granted, the implication would be that the planning system is designed so all sports clubs would be vulnerable to the activities of developers. We do not believe this to be the intention.
- 3.9 It is clear from the applicant's reports summarising their consultation that there was, and remains, a strong and continuing need for the sports venue to remain. For them to claim there is neither a continuing need, or that they only need to compare and contrast their development to a closed-down facility is nonsense.
- 3.10 Brandon Estates orchestrated the closure and simply chose to ignore the weight of the response to their consultation, not only from followers of the sports but also from most local residents.
- 3.11 In summary, the planning application should be refused because the applicants have failed in their obligations to deal with the redevelopment of the stadium in accordance with national planning policy protecting such facilities from predatory developers.
- 4. 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' and 'Planning for Growth' provide no grounds to support the housing proposals**

- 4.1 The report 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' published by the Government in February 2017 provides precious little support for Brandon Estates' housing proposals.
- 4.2 The Design and Access Statement (January 2018) at paragraph 2.1.28 (and replicated in the Planning Statement) selectively quotes from this document but fails to mention that the quoted paragraph 1.25 refers to the importance of "using suitable brownfield within settlements for homes." The Brandon Stadium site is neither suitable because of its established use, for which there is a clear and continuing need, and its rural location falling outside an existing settlement.
- 4.3 The Design Statement also fails to recognise the importance attached in 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' to bringing forward land through the development plan to meet assessed housing requirements - which Rugby Borough Council are doing through the local plan review - and the importance of protecting Green Belt.
- 4.4 Similarly, in mentioning the Ministerial Statement concerning 'Planning for Growth' (Para 2.1.19 of the Design and Access Statement, again replicated in the Planning Statement) Brandon Estates have not identified any specific support to the proposed development.
- 4.5 Paragraph 2.1.35 of the Design and Access Statement goes on to state of the redevelopment of Brandon Stadium: "*The proposed development is precisely the form and type of development that Government policy is actively promoting as part of its 'Planning for Growth' agenda and the White Paper 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' 2017.*". This really is something of a simplification. The reality is that there are many competing aspects of Government policy which must be weighed for consideration. Policies such as preserving and enhancing Community Sports facilities, Heritage Assets (whether formally designated or not) and avoiding unnecessary incursion into the Green Belt to name but a few, are other relevant considerations.
- 4.6 The fact that Brandon Estates feel it is necessary to refer to the above suggests they themselves recognise that the case for redevelopment of Brandon Stadium is not at all strong.

## **5. Brandon Stadium was, and remains, a viable use for the site.**

- 5.1 The stadium was a successful, profitable and viable venue for motorsport when it was acquired by Brandon Estates in 2013. The stadium remained as a profitable venture for the purposes of Speedway and Stock Car Racing until it was closed.
- 5.2 A key part of the applicant's evidence rests on the document entitled *Financial Assessment: Non-Technical Summary* prepared by Turley, dated November 2017. The Campaign Group believes that much of the material in this report is so inaccurate, biased or based on untruths that it has little choice but to present in some detail the reasons for challenging its content. The paragraph references are to the Financial Statement.
- 5.3 *Para 1.7:* This paragraph suggests the stadium is disused - but the point is that when it was



acquired by Brandon Estates, it was fully operational and very successful.

5.4 *Para 1.7: "The Stadium had a maximum capacity of 5,000 people"*: This is incorrect. The biggest crowd in recent years was for the 2016 BriSCA F1 World Championship meeting. This event saw 10,500 people pay through the turnstiles and featured the highest number of competitors ever to race in a BriSCA F1 Stock Car Meeting, including around 60 from overseas. On many, many occasions in the past crowds for both sports have exceeded 5,000 people - and even the marketing documents prepared by GVA in 2013 stated the capacity as 12,500 people.

5.5 *Para 1.10*: refers to the marketing exercise conducted by GVA commencing in 2013. The Campaign Group considers this exercise should be given little, if any, weight since the sales particulars invited tenders based on vacant possession of the property. Given the use of the site as an active sports stadium for Speedway and Stock Car Racing, the correct approach would have been to seek tenders based on continuing the sporting activities on the site. The Stadium was never actively marketed under its existing and established use as a sports venue. Had that been the case, interest from the Speedway and Stock Car sectors would have followed, and indeed Mr Keith Chapman, Chairman of Speedway's governing body (British Speedway Promoters' Association) has stated they would most certainly have been interested in acquiring the stadium. The Campaign Group are aware of, and have evidence of, interested parties who remain keen to take over and return the stadium to its long established use as a motorsport venue.

5.6 *Para 1.13: "New lease/licence terms were offered to Coventry Speedway Limited (owners of Coventry Bees speedway team and racing licence holder) and Coventry Racing Club Limited (owners of Coventry Stox stock car/banger racing and associated licence holder) in mid-late 2016"*: Coventry Racing Club categorically deny ever being offered a new lease in mid-late 2016.

5.7 *Para 1.14*: This section totally contradicts previous statements from Brandon Estates Ltd and Coventry Speedway Ltd because, on 3 November 2016, Brandon Estates issued a press release which commenced by stating that a lease had been signed by Coventry Speedway Ltd for the 2017 season, and two more years subject to conditions. This press release was subsequently carried on the official Coventry Speedway website. (See Appendix 2.)

5.8 *Para 1.15*: Coventry Racing Club did not move their events to Stoke as stated – four of Coventry's events were transferred, one each to Stoke, Belle Vue, King's Lynn and Sheffield.

5.9 *Para 1.15*: There is no basis for stating the financial position is behind the decision for Coventry Racing Club not to run in 2018/19. BriSCA, the Promoters' organisation, have clearly stated Coventry Racing Club has always been a viable operation in the separate letter of objection supplied by the BriSCA Chairman, Steve Rees.

5.10 *Para 1.16*: The Coventry Speedway 'deal' to compete at Leicester Stadium in 2018 is a one year arrangement, not a rolling one 'from' 2018. Additionally, this is for racing in the third (bottom) tier of the sport, the National Development League – not the top level at which the club has always previously raced.

5.11 *Para 1.17*: The statement that the stadium formally closed in January 2017 casts doubt over statements made by the owners to the press in the first half of the year which clearly stated the future of the site would not be decided until the conclusion of the police investigation into the removal of assets. This demonstrates the owner's determination to close the stadium, but to keep that intention out of the public domain until the submission of the planning application (see also 5.13).

5.12 *Para 1.18*: It is stated that the applicant has "*willingly engaged*" with interested parties. However, there is evidence from a very credible interested party who wished to BUY the stadium in March 2017 but was put off by an implied demand for the value of housing – as Brandon Estates expect their planning application to succeed on appeal.

This is demonstrated by the following quote sent to the potential purchaser on behalf of Brandon Estates:

*"Our Clients are experienced enough and certainly pragmatic enough to know that the most likely outcome of a planning application is that it will be recommended for approval by the Planning Officers but then rejected by the Planning Committee. On Appeal to the Secretary of State it is almost certain that the application will be granted.*

*I hope that this information helps you assess a value for the site. Our clients will carefully consider any offer that you make."*

We also have evidence of an interested party to LEASE the stadium (on two separate occasions) who was clearly rebuffed with a response that Stock Cars will not be considered at the stadium under any circumstances.

In May 2017 a potential leasee was told:

*"Under no circumstances will Brandon Estates permit Stock Car Racing to return to Brandon Stadium."*

This message was repeated following a further enquiry in January 2018:

*"As previously intimated, and for the avoidance of doubt: Stock car racing will never be allowed to return to the Stadium."*

Given that it is an accepted fact that Stock Car racing largely funds the operational costs for the stadium, the exclusion of Stock Cars was clearly aimed at making it unviable.

Additionally, attempts by the Campaign Group to arrange to meet with the applicants in a bid to establish a mutually suitable way forward were turned down on the basis that they were confident their impending Planning Application would be successful.

5.13 *Para 1.20*: It is stated that in November 2016 items were removed "*belonging to the applicant.*" However, the Police investigation into this incident was dropped in May 2017

with no case to answer, and the threat of civil action never materialised. For the first five months of 2017, all public statements from Brandon Estates were of the Stadium site being a crime scene, and therefore no possibility of racing could be considered. This was clearly a delaying tactic when paragraph 1.17 states the stadium was formally closed in January 2017.

5.14 *Para 1.22*: There is no mention of the fact that Coventry Racing Club, on several occasions, offered publicly to re-instate the stadium at their own cost if they could be permitted to run Stock Cars there.

5.15 *Para 1.23*: No trenches or security gate were in place prior to the first break-in. On-site security staff had also been removed prior to the break-ins, and the automated warning system fed back to an office in Halesowen – 45 minutes' drive away! This was subsequently broken and disabled by the Gypsies in any case. Welding of gates and placement of concrete-filled barrels was carried out by local residents living in fear of the incursions, frustrated by the lack of action from Brandon Estates to improve security.

Rugby Council eventually served a Community Protection Notice in September 2017. The owners failed to comply, appealed it and went to court in February 2018. There was an out-of-court settlement on that day which could have been made four months earlier – another delaying tactic that enabled further incursions and substantial damage including a fire which destroyed a turnstile building.

A separate document entitled 'The Systematic Damage to the Iconic Brandon Stadium' highlights the lack of security and resultant damage, and is included in the appendices (Appendix 3).

5.16 *Para 1.24*: While it is true that the buildings have deteriorated since the stadium was closed, this is entirely down to the lack of security measures by Brandon Estates.

5.17 *Para 1.25*: The other business interests of the former vendor are irrelevant.

5.18 *Para 1.27*: The accounts of Coventry Speedway Ltd are taken in isolation and are not relevant as they were merely tenants of the stadium. The accounts of Coventry Racing Club Ltd confirm that the stadium in fact turned in a profit in every year in which speedway and stock cars were operational (without Greyhound Racing).

We attach, as Appendix 4, a copy of a letter confirming the profitability of Speedway and Stock Car Racing from Guest Wilson, the Chartered Accountants acting for Coventry Racing Club since 2008, confirming this point.

Losses were recorded in every year of Greyhound Racing leading to the decision to cease operations after three years in 2011. Greyhound Racing was subsequently leased out. The stadium has always been a Speedway and Stock Car venue, with Greyhound Racing occasionally involved. This were never, however, a primary use of the venue.

5.19 *Para 1.29*: The assertion that speedway represents an unviable business as it registers losses in every meeting on average is inconsistent with the reports filed at Companies House,

which clearly show that profits were made in 2014 and 2015.

5.20 Little weight should be attached to the statements made by the director of Coventry Speedway Ltd to Turley, as it is known that he has received a substantial sum of money from the applicant. This is formally recorded in the minutes of the Speedway Control Bureau meeting on 9 January 2018, following which approval was granted for Coventry to compete in the third (bottom) tier of the sport at Leicester.

5.21 *Para 1.30:* It is stated that Coventry Speedway Ltd did not take up the head-lease because the team would generate an operating loss. This does not, however, explain why therefore they had negotiated a deal for the head-lease, and according to the press statement of 3 November 2016, had signed it! It is difficult to imagine that Coventry Speedway Ltd will find itself in a better position when operating 27 miles away at Leicester, with the consequent drop in attendance levels and relative lack of support for bottom-tier racing.

5.22 *Para 1.31:* The absence of full accounts of Brandon Stadium must surely make the speculation over financial performance in previous sections inappropriate, and therefore undermines the applicant's arguments regarding viability.

5.23 *Para 1.32:* This extraordinary paragraph appears to be a section to cover the authors who have reached the conclusion required from their brief in previous sections – only to now correctly state that positive trading could be achieved where tenants meet their lease obligations. The accounts of Coventry Racing Club Ltd confirm this is the case, and that Speedway and Stock Car Racing is a viable use of the site.

5.24 *Paras 1.33/1.34:* The costs of renovation are substantial, as is correctly stated, but this is largely due to the damage caused after the previous owners vacated the premises in December 2016.

This notwithstanding, repairs to the stadium are entirely possible and would undoubtedly be assisted by the local community and national sports fans, whose wish is for the stadium to remain in its form as a sporting venue. A recent public appeal for tradespeople of all types to volunteer their services at no cost to help renovate the stadium has been astonishingly successful (see Appendix 3).

5.25 *Para 1.37:* Clearly no licence holders are willing to hold motor racing events at the stadium in its current condition – but they would be if it was in a repaired condition, and they would have been had terms been offered during 2016, with Stock Cars able to run in conjunction with Speedway. Greyhound Racing would not have been involved; Speedway and Stock Car Racing together – as they had been from 1954 to 2016 - make the stadium viable.

5.26 In summary, we believe that the Viability Report is so poor that it should be discounted. The financial performance of Coventry Racing Club demonstrates that use of the stadium for Speedway and Stock Car Racing was viable and there is no reason to believe this would not continue to be the case. The writers' own information, as set out in para 1.32 of the Viability Report acknowledges the point. In effect, the authors have orchestrated the

information available to them to try to prove that the site is not viable as a sports stadium. We believe the evidence above, and in the associated attachments, demonstrates the opposite which, in effect, torpedoes the case they are making for housing redevelopment of the site.

**6. Brandon Stadium remains the best site for Speedway and Stock Car Racing in Rugby Borough, and the failure of the owners in their obligations to secure the site is the only reason that has led to significant damage to the buildings since January 2017.**

6.1 There is little doubt that significant damage has been caused to the buildings at Brandon Stadium following the closure of the stadium at the end of 2016. However, this does not detract from the continued suitability of the existing site to remain as a sports stadium.

6.2 The site is centrally located in the UK, well connected to national and regional transport links. Its established use for noisy sports is especially appropriate to its rural location. Brandon Stadium remains the best-known site to attract events of local, national and International significance, and searches to provide a suitable alternative site have proved fruitless.

6.3 It should also be noted – as shown, for example, by the applicants’ summary of consultation comments on their draft proposals - that there is a high level of support for the stadium to remain as a motorsports venue amongst local residents, as well as supporters of both Speedway and Stock Car Racing.

6.4 Paragraph 6.35 of the applicant’s Planning Statement makes the following point:

*“It is submitted that the buildings are surplus to requirements. The Viability Assessment confirms that the challenges and general decline in the speedway, stock car and greyhound sector has led to a substantial number of closures of stadia nationally, with financial difficulties in the face of falling attendances and revenues the primary driver cited. In order to share the operational costs, it is common that stock car race grounds are used for other sports including speedway and greyhound racing.”*

The Viability report makes no such assertion concerning a general decline in Speedway or Stock Car Racing. While it is correct that stadiums may come and go, particularly those located in urban areas, the number of venues used for Speedway in the UK has remained remarkably constant.

In 1998 there were 25 operational speedway venues staging league racing. In 2018, there will be 27 operational venues staging league racing. Since 2008, the number of venues has always been between 26 and 29 (See Appendix 5).

In 2016, a brand-new multi-use stadium, with speedway at its heart, opened in Manchester, funded by the local council. It staged the World Cup Final in its first season and is the home of Belle Vue – a club with a similarly proud history to Coventry. It is also interesting to note that the very well-appointed Owlerton Stadium at Sheffield, which plays host to greyhounds,

stock cars and speedway, has recently agreed a new lease for the speedway team to continue racing there.

In relation to Stock Car Racing there has been a huge growth in the number of participants. This means that a Stock Car Meeting at Coventry 25 years ago would have featured around 60 F1 Stock Cars, whereas a typical meeting in 2016 would not only feature 60-75 F1 Stock Cars but also a further 70/80 competitors in two additional race classes.

6.5 In summary, Brandon Stadium remains the best site for Speedway and Stock Car Racing in Rugby Borough, and the planning application should be rejected. Deterioration of the buildings on the site since the stadium was closed should not be regarded as a factor supporting its redevelopment for housing since to do so would, in effect, encourage developers to orchestrate the decline of land and buildings in order to secure planning permission. Brandon Estates should not be allowed to benefit from their own wrong-doing, or failure to comply with their legal and moral obligations (*Ex turpri causa non oritur actio*).

## **7. Brandon Stadium has a rich and long heritage reaching back to 1928 which should be treasured and protected.**

7.1 Brandon Stadium is an iconic sports venue which has a rich and long heritage stretching back to 1928 for Speedway and 1954 for Stock Car Racing. It has a unique place in international Speedway and UK Stock Car history.

7.2 We reject the suggestion that Brandon Stadium does not have special merit. As a 'place' comprising the venue and the track, it most certainly does. Additionally, the out-buildings were constructed in the 1940s as part of the war effort, and they have particular historic value to the area.

7.3 Brandon Stadium is far more important to both sports than any other venue because its facilities and central location are second to none, and as such it has hosted a wide array of Championship events.

7.4 There are similarities with the campaign to save Oxford Stadium, another Speedway track which has been designated as Conservation Area to prevent housing redevelopment, and Oxford City Council are investigating the compulsory purchase of the site.

7.5 In Appendix 6, we have set out a review of the history and heritage of Brandon Stadium. This provides a wealth of information, including a chronology of the history and the stadium until its closure following the 2016 racing season, as well as statistics and facts covering the number and types of events and Championships held, and further information on the Speedway and Stock Car heritage.

7.6 In summary, we wish to highlight the rich and long heritage of Brandon Stadium and implore Rugby Borough Council to embrace this initially through rejection of this planning application. The stadium currently lacks official Government protection from permanent destruction. It should be recognised and protected as a national and local heritage asset. If it cannot be protected, it will be a damning indictment of the Planning system. It should at least be locally

listed or on a local heritage asset register. Local Listing, designation as an Asset of Community Value and other protective measures should be considered now by the Local Authority.

**8. The redevelopment of Brandon Stadium will result in the destruction of one of the most important tourist facilities in Rugby Borough.**

8.1 Redevelopment of Brandon Stadium will result in the destruction of one of the most important and most visited tourist facilities in Rugby Borough, with significant knock-on economic effects on local businesses.

8.2 Promotion of tourism is an important element of the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (CWLEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). Within section 2.8 of the Updated Strategic Economic Plan (August 2016) under Culture and Tourism section the SEP indicates that the *"CWLEP will support the ambitions of cultural and touristic assets in the CWLEP area. The LEP will also support local cultural community activities, as well as high-profile events, that raise visibility nationally and internationally"*. Many of the events that take place at Brandon Stadium fall under this category.

8.3 The stadium has hosted regular sports events for many decades, providing considerable benefits to the local economy both directly (employment) and indirectly through supporting trading in nearby facilities such as shops, restaurants and hotels.

8.4 The sale of the stadium and its subsequent forced closure has resulted in job losses too, with five full-time and numerous part-time stadium staff, as well as seven Rugby (motorcycle) Rider Training full-time staff having lost their jobs.

8.5 The Coventry Bees attracted a mainly locally drawn crowd supplemented by visiting supporters, with Championship events attracting people from wider afield.

8.6 Stock Car events, on the other hand, tend to regularly draw support from a much wider area both nationally and internationally. Given that around 150 competitors took part in each event, there are also strong links to the automotive sector through the building and repair of competition vehicles and through the supply of parts.

8.7 Brandon Stadium is the only permanent motorsport venue in Warwickshire at the northern end of 'Motorsport Valley'. Its economic significance as part of the motorsport sector should not be underestimated.

8.8 In summary, we believe that Brandon Stadium has significant economic importance to Rugby Borough which should be protected and nurtured. The applicant has conveniently dismissed the economic case through a comparison of their development with a disused stadium, a situation that was created by their own approach.

**9. The applicants have failed to demonstrate the viability of their proposals.**

9.1 The applicants have gone to considerable lengths to try to demonstrate the non-viability of the stadium use on the site.

9.2 It is particularly noteworthy, therefore, that the Viability Report prepared by Turley has failed to provide any justification to demonstrate the viability of the proposed development, in particular, the proposed level of affordable housing provision and the scale and financing of the provision and future ongoing maintenance of the open space.

9.3 These concerns are without consideration of their obligations to finance the provision of alternative replacement sports facilities.

**10. The proposals are premature and should be considered through the Development Plan process.**

10.1 The applicants have submitted objections to the emerging Local Plan Review seeking housing redevelopment of the site, although the scale of the proposals in the planning application (up to 137 dwellings) is materially different to that included in their objections to the local plan review (some 250 dwellings).

10.2 The Save Coventry Stadium Campaign have also submitted objections to the local plan review seeking a new policy in the plan protecting the stadium from redevelopment (this is set out in Appendix 7).

10.3 While these valid objections are still under consideration through the local plan public examination, the planning application can be considered premature.

10.4 Another reason for the proposal to be considered premature is that the community of Brandon & Bretford Parish have commenced preparation of a new Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the stadium site.

10.5 The Design and Access Statement brazenly states "*no weight is to be given to the new Neighbourhood Plan*" - purportedly because it is not yet finalised. However, much of the consultation work has been completed with the local community to establish their views for how they wish to see the Parish develop over the next few years. In addition, Rugby Borough Council made it clear to the Parish in the preparation of their Neighbourhood consultation that there was no need for the Parish to take new housing developments at this time.

10.6 Why have Brandon Estates suggested the decision on the planning application should be made giving "no weight" to the wishes of the local community? Is it because the local community are substantially supportive of retaining the Stadium facility?

10.7 The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation did, of course, specifically ask the community what they wanted to see happen regarding the future of Brandon Stadium. The Neighbourhood Plan will, in due course be part of the development plan for Rugby Borough, so there is a strong case for deferring any decision on Brandon Stadium in any event to ensure the Development Plan is not contradicted before it is even adopted.

10.8 In summary, we consider the planning application should be rejected on the grounds of



prematurity.

**11. The Sustainability Appraisal and associated background material accompanying the planning application is deficient and does not provide sufficient basis to support the new housing proposals.**

- 11.1 The Sustainability Appraisal under the heading National Planning Policy Framework commencing on page 6 fails to recognise that Government Policy seeks to protect sports facilities from development. This is a fundamental omission which tends to show that the following assessment is by no means even-handed. It is directed to conclude the desired outcome of Brandon Estates.
- 11.2 The Sustainability Appraisals summary of the approach in the Rugby Core Strategy on page 8 fails to refer to the development strategy and the role of Green Belt within this. The summary of the approach in the Local Plan Review on page 9 is similarly deficient.
- 11.3 The Summary of Policy on page 10 of the Sustainability Appraisal clearly is weighted only to the consideration of new housing on the application site.
- 11.4 Section 5.1 only considers the economic benefits of the new housing. It fails to point out that essentially the same economic benefits would be accrued from the housing sites being proposed through the local plan review to meet the overall housing requirement. Most importantly, the study fails to recognise the damage to the local economy through the redevelopment of the stadium.
- 11.5 Section 5.2 sings the praises of the sustainable location of the site without mentioning those benefits also apply to Brandon Stadium and help explain why it is such a much-loved and intensively used venue.
- 11.6 Section 5.3 onwards until page 18 covers the value of the affordable and high quality homes design and energy considerations, but fails to mention that such benefits will be equally provided on other sites in line with the local plan review.
- 11.7 The remainder of this section until page 21 is at least tailored to the application site, suggesting that impacts on matters such as water efficiency, flood risk, ecology, pollution and waste can be mitigated. This is not surprising, but these are matters that do nothing to outweigh the fundamental objections to the principle of housing development.
- 11.8 The SA Review is set out on pages 24 and 25. This is seriously deficient for a number of reasons:
- Strategic Objective 1 (SA1 and SA5): there is no mention of the social impacts of the loss of Brandon Stadium. The stadium has proved an important part of the lives of many thousands of people. In addition, are considerable known benefits arising from grassroots motorsports in providing positive leisure and recreation outcomes which divert some participants away from less constructive and socially disruptive activities.

- SA 2 also fails to mention loss of the stadium, one of the most significant leisure facilities in Rugby Borough.
- Under SA4, the contribution from affordable housing is exaggerated as this would be available elsewhere under the local plan review.
- Under SA 6, there is no mention of the damage to the local economy caused by loss of the stadium. The ++ assessment beggars belief.
- Under SA 8, the implication is that the site is in an urban area. It is not, it is in a rural location, and housing redevelopment could undermine rather than support urban regeneration in nearby Coventry.
- SA13 fails to recognise the long and rich sporting heritage of Brandon Stadium, quite remarkably suggesting a neutral impact.
- SA14 scores a ++ for promoting a sustainable transport network. This is hard to understand since no real material improvements to the transport network will be provided.

11.9 We have noticed that section 14 of the application form describes the property as a "*Vacant Stadium*". It is only vacant because the owners have engineered that situation. They have forced events at the venue to close. The applicants have then failed to answer the question as to when events at the venue ceased. For obvious reasons they are blaming others for the closure when they had the power to keep it open - but it did not suit their purpose. The answer to this question on the form is therefore very misleading, self-seeking and contrived. There is all the difference in the world between a Stadium that is derelict and redundant because no one wants to use it and a situation where everyone wants to see it used but are frustrated from doing so.

11.10 We would also wish to point out that several of the lengthy reports supporting the application are desk-top assessments all directed to conclude that housing is the only real option, without sufficient analysis of the real circumstances appertaining to the site. Some conclude further detailed work will be required.

11.11 While we consider the proposal should fall on matters of principle, it is really not satisfactory that a decision on the future of an iconic sports venue should rely on partial information (for example, on hazardous waste and foul drainage) so that will not be a burden on the public purse.

11.12 The archaeology report is truly ironic, since it examines what might be buried below the surface in terms of historic artefacts - but there is zero acknowledgement of the heritage asset that is the historic iconic Stadium above the ground. The main feature of the site is proposed to be destroyed along with almost 100 years of a remarkable history that is part of UK history.

11.13 The Campaign's Group's conclusion is that the Sustainability Appraisal and the raft of supporting information is seriously deficient for the reasons above, but also because it completely fails to consider different options, one of which must be the retention of the site as a sports stadium.

## **CONCLUSION**

We believe that the grounds of objection outlined above against Brandon Estates' aggressive and predatory housing proposals are weighty and present a compelling case for planning permission for the redevelopment of Brandon Stadium for new housing to be refused.

The objections mainly cover matters of principle that cannot simply be overcome by the submission of further information.

While it might be easy to anticipate opposition to the development from the close-knit Speedway and Stock Car Racing 'communities of interest' it most certainly is not to be so readily expected by the local communities of Binley Woods and Brandon who live close to a noisy sports venue.

This, however, as shown by the applicant's own information, is indeed the case - almost certainly reflecting the fact that anyone who chooses to live in the area has done so in full knowledge of the stadium's existence.

The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign accordingly and respectfully calls upon Rugby Borough Council to embrace the long and rich sporting heritage to reject the planning application which would lead to the loss of one of the most iconic sports stadiums in the country.

In the – hopefully unlikely - event that Rugby Borough Council might be persuaded to look favourably residential on the site of Brandon Stadium, the Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign would strongly urge the current planning application to be refused, with the applicant being advised that they should only re-apply subject to the obligation to provide an alternative replacement stadium of comparable quality being considered in tandem.

Finally, we note that Rugby Borough Council's Corporate Strategy 2017-20 strapline is 'Proud of our past, fit for the future.' We respectfully call upon them to apply this principle when making their decision on this planning application.

#### **PRESS COVERAGE**

The planning application has attracted extensive press coverage both locally and nationally with the campaign also being taken to Parliament. Appendix 8 includes copies of the following press articles:

- a) The Mail on Sunday feature by their Chief Sports Writer Oliver Holt on 28 January 2018
- b) Press release from Mark Pawsey MP 6 November 2017
- c) Speedway Star independent investigation into the planning application, written by respected sports journalist Peter Oakes.

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Background Information on the Campaign to Save Coventry Speedway and Stox.

Appendix 2 – Press release from Brandon Estates announcing the signing of a lease for 2017 by Coventry Speedway.

Appendix 3 - 'The Systematic Damage to the Iconic Stadium' highlights the lack of security and resultant damage.

Appendix 4 – Copy of accountants' letter dated 7 February 2018.

Appendix 5 – Analysis of the number of UK Speedway stadia operational from 1998 to 2017.

Appendix 6 – Brandon Stadium - A brief history of this iconic stadium, one of the most important motorsport venues in the U.K.

Appendix 7 – The Campaign Group's objections made to the local plan review.

Appendix 8 – Examples of major press coverage.

## Appendix 1

### Background Information on the Campaign to Save Coventry Speedway and Stox.

The original Facebook Group 'Save Coventry Speedway' campaign was the brainchild of Pete Lawrence, and set up on behalf of supporters of the Coventry Bees Speedway team and Stock Car Racing in late 2015, in the face of news that an outline planning application was being prepared to build up to 250 houses on the site, which would mean certain demolition for the stadium, much loved by many generations as one of the country's top speedway and stock car stadia since its first race was staged way back in 1928.

Brandon Stadium is an iconic venue, an important community focus and a heritage asset as well as being the largest entertainment venue in the Rugby borough. Its loss as a sporting venue would be devastating to the area and to the sports of Speedway and Stock Car Racing. It would probably spell the end of Speedway in Coventry / Rugby forever.

The representations to the Rugby Local Plan at both Preferred Options and Publication Stages were submitted by Pete Lawrence and David Carter under the name, Save Coventry Stadium Campaign Group. Please note that this name has been retained for the purposes of the representations through all stages of the local plan.

The original Save Coventry Speedway Facebook Group (which remains online with c3,800 members), the Coventry Observer Campaign and various other well intended activities associated with trying to get Speedway and Stox back to Coventry have all been pulled together in the form of a Campaign Group.

The objective of forming this Campaign Group was to identify a clear vision, avoid duplication of effort and co-ordinate activities to achieve that vision, in a structured manner. That vision is to see the return of both Speedway and Stock Car Racing back to Coventry / Rugby, preferably at the iconic Brandon Stadium or at a new venue, as soon as possible.

Both sports are well represented in the group and share the common vision, and the Committee members are:

Jeff Davies – Retired Motor Industry Director and Coventry Track Photographer for 33 years

David Rowe – Sports Journalist, Writer and Broadcaster of Football and Speedway

Steve Jones - Nuneaton Speedway Supporters Club representative

John Clarke – Retired former Director of Buildbase

Pete Lawrence - Started the original Facebook group a few years ago

David Carter - Town Planner and long standing stock car supporter

Wayne Roberts - Local radio BBC Coventry & Warwickshire correspondent

Shaun Reynolds – Journalist from the Coventry Observer

Chris Anderson – Director of Whale Tankers and Manager of Chris Harris

Colin Bate - Former Marketing Director at Unipart

Nigel Harray – Stock Car driver and son of former Bees rider John Harray

Paul Hines – Stock Car Driver and Drivers Association Committee Member

Paul Taylor - Retired former Legal Secretary specialising in property

For further information please visit both the original Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/savecoentrayspeedway/>

and the Campaign Group's website:

<http://www.savecoentrayspeedway.com/>

**Appendix 2**

**Press release from Brandon Estates announcing the signing of a lease for 2017 by Coventry  
Speedway.**

*From: Paul Dimoldenberg  
Sent: Thursday, November 3, 2016 5:06 PM  
To: undisclosed-recipients:  
Subject: Press Notice - Coventry Bees sign new Brandon Stadium lease*

*BRANDON ESTATES LTD*

*Press Release*

*3rd November 2016*

*Coventry Bees sign new Brandon Stadium lease*

*Coventry Bees have signed a new lease on Brandon Stadium, following discussions earlier this year coordinated by Rugby Borough Council.*

*The Coventry Bees speedway team had been facing their last season at the stadium after it had been sold for development. But after Cllr Michael Stokes, Leader of Rugby Borough Council, opened talks between the Bees and Agents acting for the new landowners, Brandon Estates Ltd, the Bees have signed a new lease to allow the team to continue competing next season while they search for a new long-term venue. Brandon Estates has also agreed to sponsor the Bees next season.*

*The new lease runs for one year from 1 January 2017 until October 2017, with the possibility of a further two years, subject to conditions. The lease would allow Coventry Bees and junior race meetings. Additional events would be subject to individual agreement.*

*Darren English, spokesman for the stadium owners, Brandon Estates Ltd, said:*

*"After concluding our discussions and negotiations we very pleased that the Bees will continue at Brandon until October 2017 with the possibility of a further two years, subject to the long-term re-development of the site being settled"*

*"This will give the Bees security for the next 12 months, and possibly longer, allowing the team more time to find an alternative venue. We are also delighted to be sponsoring the Bees next season."*

*"I would like to thank the Council for playing such a key role in these discussions and helping to broker an agreement that takes all parties forward in a positive and practical way."*

*Cllr Michael Stokes, Leader of Rugby Borough Council, said:*

*"It is clear that the situation the Bees and the other stadium users find themselves in is not ideal, but the lease that has been offered to them is a good compromise that will allow speedway and stock car racing to continue at Brandon for at least another year."*

*"After meeting fans groups earlier this year and hearing their concerns first hand, I am delighted to have been able to bring all of the interested parties together to allow an offer to be made."*



*Mick Horton of Coventry Speedway, said:*

*“We have signed the new lease to give the speedway team security for the next year at least, while we continue to investigate the options for the team’s long-term future. We would like to thank the new owners for offering us the new lease and new sponsorship money, which will certainly help our finances over the next 12 months.”*

*“We hope that all our fans will join me in thanking the Council and the new owners now that we will have another full season at Brandon Stadium in 2017.”*

*ENDS*

*Contact Paul Dimoldenberg 020 7566 7960 and 07864 042 584*

*PAUL DIMOLDENBERG  
Chairman*

*D 020 7566 7960  
M 07864 042 584*

*cid:image001.jpg@01D1F16A.9F3B0E10*

*20-24 Old Street  
London  
EC1V 9AB*

*T 020 7566 7979  
F 020 7566 7970*

### **Appendix 3**

**'The Systematic Damage to the Iconic Stadium' highlights the lack of security and resultant damage.**

# THE SYSTEMATIC DAMAGE TO THE ICONIC BRANDON STADIUM

## APPENDIX 3



The Applicant Brandon Estates Limited, attempts to support its application for Planning Permission by suggesting that Brandon Stadium is dilapidated.

On 26 September 2017 Rugby Council served notice on the Applicant Brandon Estates Limited pursuant to section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014;

*'The Council is satisfied that your conduct is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of others in the locality insofar as: There is an accumulation of waste and inadequately secured land providing unauthorised access on the land ....'*

We believe that any decision must follow the judicial decisions and findings.

We also believe that Rugby Council must follow and not make a decision inconsistent with the findings of its Environment & Public Realm Department.

In the light of the fact that the damage is a direct result of the Applicant's failure to secure the site, we submit that the Applicant should not benefit from its own wrong and that the principle 'ex turpi causa non oritur actio' should be applied and the Application rejected.

To support our contention this report sets out details of the damage caused as a direct result of the Applicant's breaches and includes the following:

- Background information leading up to the previous owner / leasee removing fixtures & fittings
- Pictures taken throughout the stadium on 31st December 2016 (the day the previous owner / leasee vacated the site).
- Pictures taken throughout 2017 and the beginning of 2018 which highlight the complete failure by Brandon Estates to secure the site.
- Pictures which show the systematic and progressive damage resulting from the applicants' failure to secure the site, enabling incursions of gypsies on 5 separate occasions.
- A register of Tradesmen / women who have volunteered to give their time freely to refurbish Brandon Stadium should it revert to its previous long established use as a motorsport venue.

## Background

Brandon Stadium was for so many years, the finest oval motorsport stadium in the country.

The largest recorded attendance figure of 27,000 people was in 1948 for a speedway event called the 'Brandonapolis'. In more recent times, legislation introduced following the Hillsborough disaster meant that Brandon Stadium crowd limit was set at 12,500.

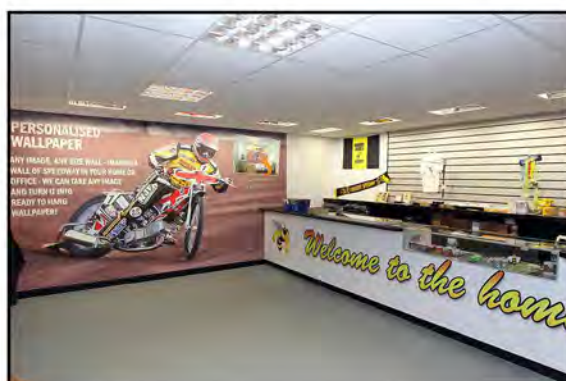
The stadium featured a large covered grandstand, with bars and food outlets on two levels, a restaurant, private hospitality boxes, a hospitality lounge and a disabled viewing area.

Being centrally located and with a large car park, Brandon, in the borough of Rugby, staged all of the biggest and most prestigious speedway and stock car meetings both nationally and internationally.

The stadium was sold in late 2013, not because it was unviable as is claimed by the developers who seek to demolish it, but because the previous owner had taken out loans against the stadium, which were called in by NatWest bank.

After the sale, the former owners, Coventry Racing Club (promoters of the Stock Car licence) were allowed to continue operating until the end of the 2016 season. In turn, they allowed Coventry Speedway Limited (owner of the speedway promoter's licence) to continue to rent the stadium to operate Coventry Bees

Negotiations to extend that for another year and possibly beyond, were held between Coventry Speedway Ltd and new owners Brandon Estates, without the knowledge of Coventry Racing Club.



## Removal of Fixtures and Fittings

It is believed the terms of the lease offered to Coventry Speedway Ltd specifically excluded former owners and stock car promoters, Coventry Racing Club from operating at the stadium.

After failing to reach agreement for stock car racing to continue at Brandon, Coventry Racing Club began removing various fixtures and fittings they believed belonged to them, including furniture, grandstand seating, safety fence, track lights etc.

Despite repeated offers by Coventry Racing Club to reinstate those fixtures and fittings (at their own cost), if an agreement was reached no such agreement materialised and instead, in December 2016, Brandon Estates' representatives, Howell and Company Solicitors, reported their removal to Warwickshire Police, alleging criminal damage and declared the stadium to be a 'crime scene'. Their statement read "Unfortunately, until the police investigation is completed, and any other litigation that might be taking place has been concluded, it is not clear what the future holds for Brandon Stadium."

Coventry Racing Club vacated the stadium on 31st December 2016. The pictures shown below and on the following page clearly show that whilst fixtures and fittings had been removed, the stadium was left in a clean and tidy state.

Some five months later, in early May, the Police investigation was dropped, with a statement from police that said "There is no evidence to suggest a criminal offence has taken place."

A statement from Howell and Company that they may pursue a civil lawsuit followed. Civil action was never pursued.



Main Office



Hospitality box 1



Hospitality box 2



Upstairs Bar (centre)



Upstairs Bar (pits end)



Diamond Lounge



Board Room



Track Shop



Restaurant



Toilet in upper stand bar



Main Turnstiles



Pits



Toilets in lower grandstand



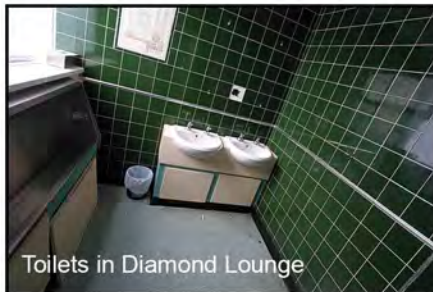
Programme kiosk



Exit from pits / grandstand



Toilets in lower grandstand



Toilets in Diamond Lounge



Speed Square



Wide angle view of track

All of the pictures above and on the previous page were taken on 31st December\* (the day before Brandon Estates took possession).

They clearly show, that whilst various fixtures and fittings (seats, track lights, furniture etc) had been removed, on the day when the previous owner / leasee left, the stadium was in a clean and tidy state.

\* Pictures throughout this document were taken with a digital camera and as such, the date taken cannot be disputed as metadata, including the date the picture was taken, is encrypted in the file.

Section 1.23 of the Viability NTS Document states the following:

*“Despite the applicant undertaking significant works and incurring costs to secure the subject site, there have been repeated recorded occurrences of trespassing and further criminal damage to the premises over the course of 2017 to date. Prior to the first breakin the applicant implemented additional security measures including employment of onsite security staff, installation of security gates and digging of trenches to restrict vehicular access amongst a wider package of measures.”*

Photographic evidence on the following pages demonstrate this claim to be a complete fabrication.

In the first five months of 2017 there were no issues at the stadium, then on 6th June, gypsies gained access to the site by breaking the small, low grade padlock on the main entrance to the car park.

They set up camp on the car park and in the days which followed, broke into the stadium itself through the large hangar doors. This too had been secured by another low grade, inexpensive padlock.

The pictures on the right were taken on 11th June (ie. after the gypsies had left the site). The picture below (right) shows the main gate to the car park, secured by a small low grade padlock - with no additional security gate and no trenches as is claimed.

They broke into the stadium itself through the large hangar doors, which like the main gate, was secured by a small low grade padlock.

Though the gypsies left a mess behind, no significant damage was done.

One would have thought this incident would have convinced Brandon Estates to improve security but instead they removed the physical presence of the on site security (which residents claim to be just one man, sitting in his car all day).

The key to preventing further incursions and subsequent damage would have been to have secured the two main gates into the car park to prevent vehicular access. But Brandon Estates failed to act.



Instead, Brandon Estates installed a security alarm *inside the perimeter of the stadium itself*. The alarm was an inexpensive motion sensor which triggered a recorded voice message from small speakers saying “Your presence has been detected, security is on its way”.

Residents are adamant that no one ever responded. The suppliers of the system, Vacant Property Services, are based in Halesowen, some 30 miles away and incapable of a “fast action response” as Brandon Estates claim.

Gypsies arrived again in July and still Brandon Estates did nothing to improve security. Flimsy padlocks on the two main gates were the only thing stopping gypsies gaining access onto the site again. Fortunately, they too left without causing any significant damage.

In the Planning Documents, a document called Statement of Community Involvement, Brandon Estates state the following:

*Both prior to and after the first break-ins, the applicant had taken steps to enhance security at the site in order to prevent further instances of trespass and damage. This included:*

- *the locking of all gates and perimeter fencing*
- *the employment of 24-hour security services on site (Sapphire), including personnel and dogs, for the first 6 months of 2017;*
- *the subsequent employment of security firm VPS UK Ltd ('VPS') (in agreement with the applicant's insurers) to monitor the site (subsequently alarmed) and*
- *conduct regular weekly inspections (with a rapid response if the alarm was activated);*
- *the installation of security gates, metal sheeting and barriers (the latter in the form of concrete filled barrels), including the welding shut of the gates following the first occupation (and departure) by travellers; and*
- *provision of a soil bund to prevent vehicular access at the site entrance*

Gypsies arrived on site for the third time in September.

Pictures on the following pages show two things: Firstly, security had not been improved with very little of what Brandon Estates claim to have put in place, actually there, and secondly, unlike the first two incursions, on this occasion, the stadium was vandalised to a truly shocking extent.





Reception



Pits Office



Offices



Charles Ochiltree Box



Tote windows



Track Shop



First Aid Room

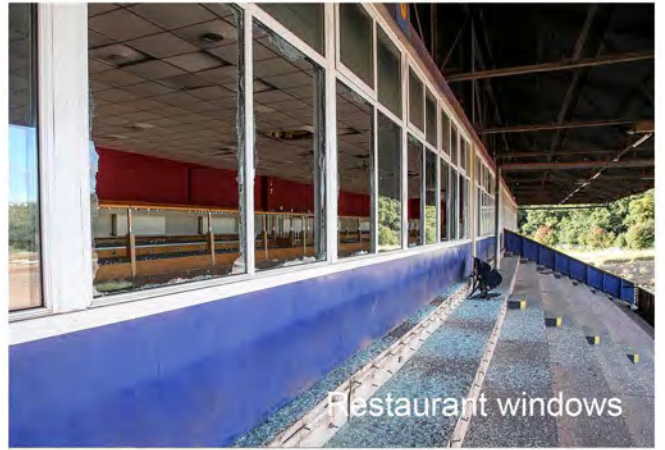


Rugby Rider Training HQ

These pictures show the shocking vandalism carried out by gypsies in early September 2017. The pictures were taken shortly after the gypsies left, on 13th September.



Grandstand windows



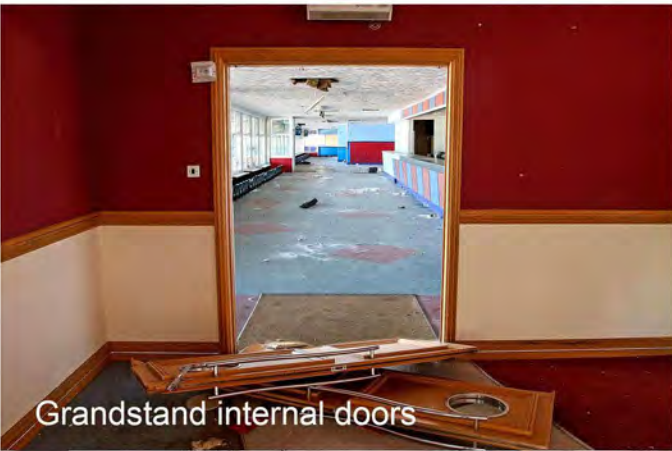
Restaurant windows



Hospitality box windows



VIP guest entrance



Grandstand internal doors



Understand Bar doors



Track



Motorcycle parking area

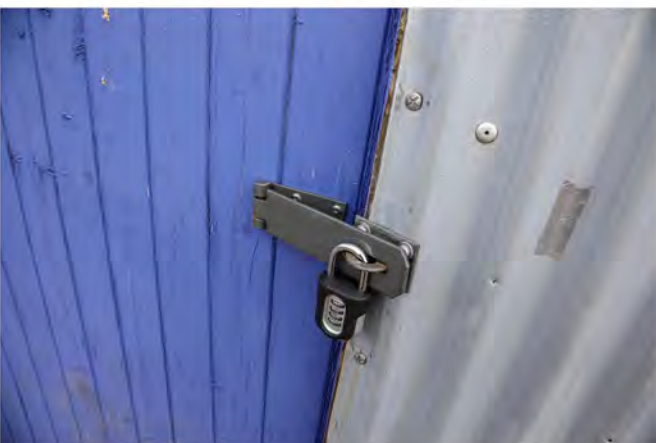
More pictures taken on 13th September 2017 showing windows smashed throughout the stadium and doors ripped off their hinges.

The pictures below were taken on 15th September 2017 and show the lack of security which had made it so easy for the gypsies to get onto the site.

The main gate was completely unsecured, allowing vehicular / caravan access to the car park unhindered. Doorways into the stadium itself were either not locked at all or with inexpensive, low security rating padlocks the flimsiest deterrent stopping people entering the stadium itself.

Quite clearly, in late September 2017, after the third and most damaging incursion there were no earth bunds, no trenches and still no robust efforts by Brandon Estates to protect the site and scant regard for local residents who were having to endure the consequences.

Later this same day (15th September), Rugby Council served a Warning Notice on Brandon Estates, under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act. The notice gave them 7 days (until 22nd September) to clean up the site and make it secure to prevent access from unauthorised persons.





These pictures were also taken in mid-September 2017. The picture top left shows the notices served on Brandon Estates on 15th September. Other pictures show the concrete filled barrels and one pair of gates (at the Speedway Lane end), welded together.

The actions were not carried out by Brandon Estates, but by local residents, desperate to secure the site and frustrated by the lack of action by the owners.

The pictures also show the pathetic attempts and completely inadequate measures by the owners to secure various gates and doorways. The metal plates secured from the outside, by small self tapping screws and similarly, the main gate was 'secured' by two self tapping screws which could be removed in a matter of a few minutes by anyone wanting to enter the stadium.

Not surprisingly, these measures did not satisfy the requirements of Rugby Council's warning notice and on 26th September 2017, Brandon Estates were served with a Community Protection Notice under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act (shown overleaf).



# NOTICE PURSUANT TO SECTION 43 OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014 COMMUNITY PROTECTION NOTICE

To: The Director(s) Reference: 16.09.17  
Of: Brandon Estates Limited, Coventry Stadium, Speedway Lane, Brandon, Coventry, CV8 3GJ

**THIS IS A FORMAL NOTICE** issued by Rugby Borough Council, pursuant to section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014

The Council is satisfied that your conduct\* is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of others in the locality insofar as: There is an accumulation of waste and inadequately secured land providing unauthorised access on the land as edged in red on the attached map.

*\* Note that "conduct" in this instance is defined as including a failure to act, in this case to cease to cause detriment on the quality of life of others in the locality from waste and unauthorised encampments.*

*\* "Conduct" on, or affecting, premises that a person owns, leases, occupies, controls, operates, or maintains, is treated as conduct of that person.*

*\* For the purpose of this Notice, "Land" referred to herein refers to the land delineated red on the attached map, known as Coventry Stadium, Speedway Lane, Brandon, Coventry.*

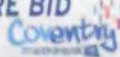
**HEREBY REQUIRES YOU** as [(one of) the person(s) responsible for the said conduct] the owner and/or occupier/person in control of the land and/or premises, by **08:00 09 October 2017** following the service of this Notice to:

1. **Ensure that no waste and / or other unsightly items shall accumulate on the land to such an extent as to be detrimental to the quality of life of others in the locality.**
2. **Adequately secure the site to secure against access by unauthorised persons or groups, including gypsies and travellers. This includes but is not limited to all access points whether lawfully created or otherwise. This requirement includes the improvement of security measures in relation to the current gated access points, taking into account any legal rights for ingress and egress that effect the land. In particular, known traveller access points shall be physically secured or adapted so far as reasonably practicable to resist unlawful attempts to secure entry with vehicles.**
3. **All buildings and associated structures within the land and forming what is known as Coventry Stadium must be suitably and sufficiently secured to resist attempts at access by unauthorised persons.**
4. **Notwithstanding the above requirements, you shall also secure regular monitoring and inspection of the land including all boundaries, access points, buildings and structures. This shall be carried out at a frequency of no less than once every 14 days. Any boundaries that can provide unauthorised access found on inspection must be secured as soon as possible and without delay. A written record of each inspection must be kept and made available to Rugby Borough Council on request.**
5. **You shall not suffer or permit the premises under your control to deteriorate to the extent that such premises become detrimental to the quality of life of others in the locality, whether by reason of unauthorised access, waste or otherwise.**

Dated: 26 September 2017  
Rugby Borough Council, Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby CV21 2RR  
Telephone: (01788) 533533 Email: contactcentre@rugby.gov.uk

Signed: *[Signature]*  
for: Head of Environment & Public Realm

PROUDLY BACKING COVENTRY 2021 UK CITY OF CULTURE BID



# Warwickshire Telegraph

Wednesday, October 4, 2017

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70p



## INSIDE: YOUR HOMES AND LIVING PULLOUT

> ENDA MULLEN REPORTS: Page 6



## CLEAN IT UP!



**Brandon Stadium owners ordered to tidy and secure derelict speedway site to prevent travellers moving on**

> Page 4



**Sisu appeal to be heard this month**

> Page 9



**City roadworks to cause delays**

This page and the following page shows how the Warwickshire Telegraph reported the issuing of the Community Protection Notice by Rugby Council. Rather than accepting it and improving security, Brandon Estates chose to appeal it. In the following four months before it went to court, gypsies visited the site on two further occasions, carrying out more significant damage, including the burning down of a turnstile block.

News

By ENDA MULLEN

News reporter  
enda.mullen@trinitymirror.com

THE owners of Brandon Stadium have been ordered to clean up the derelict speedway site and secure it to prevent further incursions by travellers.

The Community Protection Notice under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act was served to Brandon Estates on September 26 by Rugby Borough Council.

The company has until 8am on Monday, October 9, to comply with it.

The order states: "The council is satisfied that your conduct is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of others in the locality insofar as: There is an accumulation of waste and inadequately secured land providing unauthorised access on the land."

The notice continues with a series of demands which include ensuring that "no waste and/or other unsightly items shall accumulate on the land to such an extent as to be detrimental to the quality of life of others in the locality".

As well as cleaning the

# Brandon Stadium owners told to clean-up site

stadium up the notice also demands the site is secured.

That follows three incursions by travellers

since the stadium ceased to be used as a speedway venue by Coventry Bees earlier this year.

The council notice demands Brandon Estates "adequately secure the site to secure against access by unauthorised persons or groups, including gypsies and travellers".

It goes on to demand "the improvement of security measures in relation to the current gated access points" and adds they should be able to "resist unlawful attempts to secure entry with vehicles".

The notice concludes by demanding that the site should be regularly monitored and inspected "at a frequency of not less than once every 14 days".

Brandon Stadium has become derelict following a long-running row between former Bees owner Avtar Sandhu and Brandon Estates.

Current Bees owner Mick Horton was hoping to run speedway at the stadium and Mr Sandhu removed fixtures and fittings from the stadium.

Initially Brandon Estates claimed it could cost up to £1m to restore the stadium to an oper-



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ational state and reported the removal of the fixtures and fittings to Warwickshire Police.

Meanwhile Mr Sandhu said he was happy to return the fixtures and fittings that had been removed.

The matter was ultimately dropped by the police but no settlement was agreed and a stalemate ensued.

The condition of the stadium meant the Bees' licence to race was effectively put on ice earlier this year meaning the team could not compete in speedway's elite league this season. Brandon Estates recently revealed it wanted to build 250

“

The council is satisfied that your conduct is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of others...

The order

Rugby Local Plan in a bid to make this happen.

In relation to the deterioration of the site and calls for improved security in relation to travellers the Save Coventry Bees fan group said: "Since full site security was withdrawn at the start of 2017, there have been three separate incursions and it is our opinion that the site owners have done little to prevent them.

"We are aware that damage to the stadium itself has occurred at the most recent 'visit' and this could in fact be seen to strengthen the case Brandon Estates are attempting to build, that the site is derelict and that redevelopment should be made a priority.

"We can confirm that notwithstanding our efforts to acquire a new, long-term site, we will continue to fervently oppose the redevelopment of Brandon and will be making representations as such to the forthcoming public enquiry into the local plan."

The Telegraph did contact Brandon Estates to ask the company to comment on the Rugby Borough Council but no reply has as yet been received.

houses on the stadium site and has made submissions to alter the

Brandon Estates appealed the notice and the date to hear the case in court was subsequently set for 6th February 2018.

In early October 2017, Brandon Estates dropped mounds of earth outside the two main gates to the car park.



The earth mound at the main gate was subsequently removed and replaced with a second, inner gate. The pictures below were taken on 3rd January 2018 and show the main gate, still secured with a low security rated padlock and a new inner gate and concrete barriers. The pillars of the inner gate however, were not secured to the ground but merely sitting underneath the concrete blocks and were effectively of no use whatsoever.

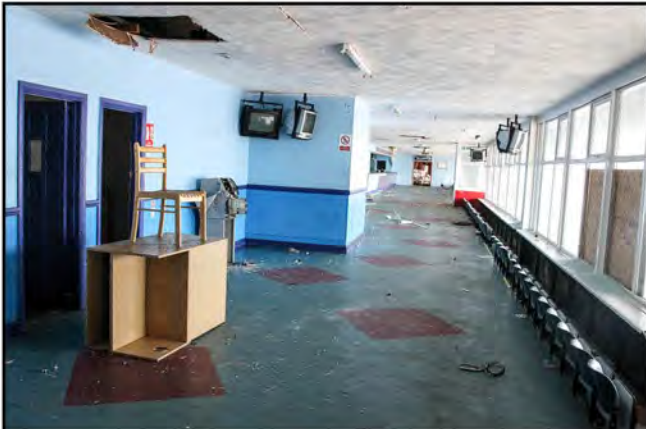
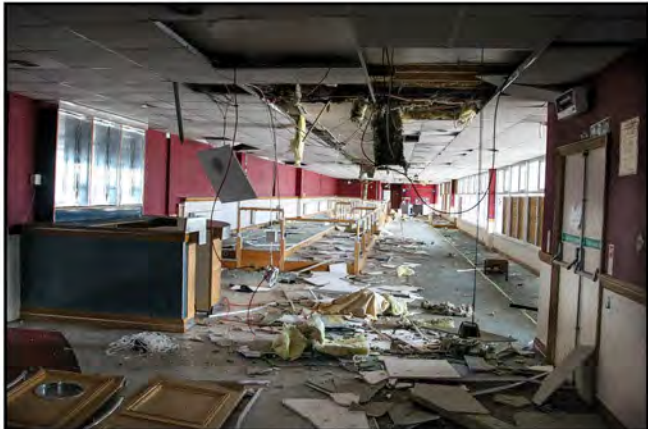
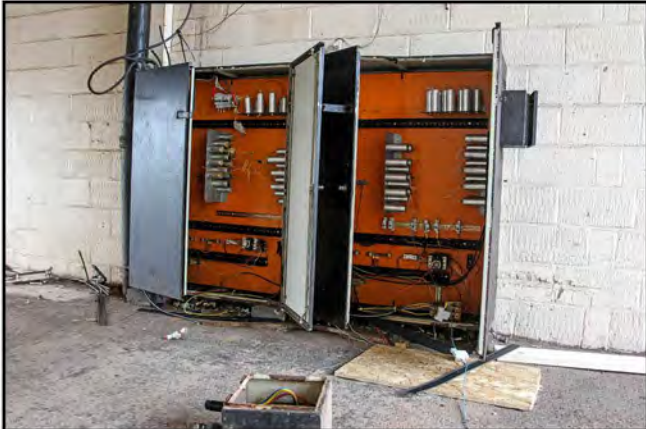


Soon after the above pictures were taken and with site security still totally inadequate, gypsies arrived at the site for the fourth time. This small group left after just a day or two but were followed by a much larger contingent straight afterwards.

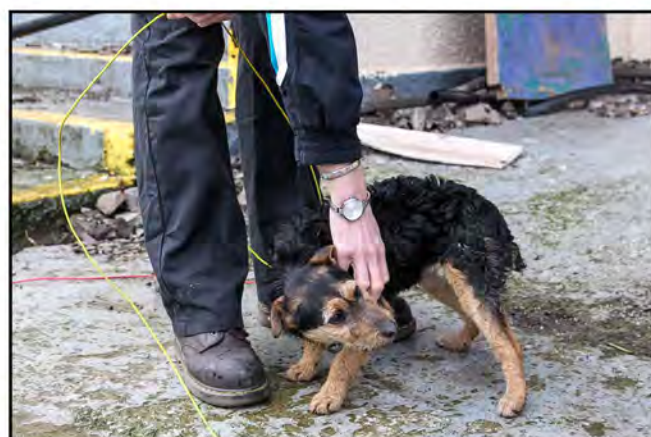
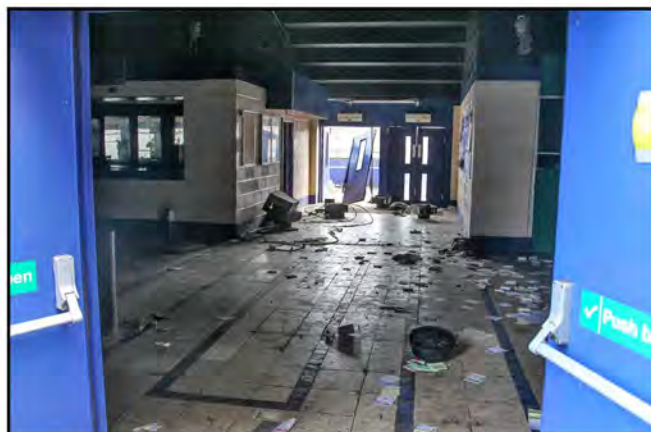
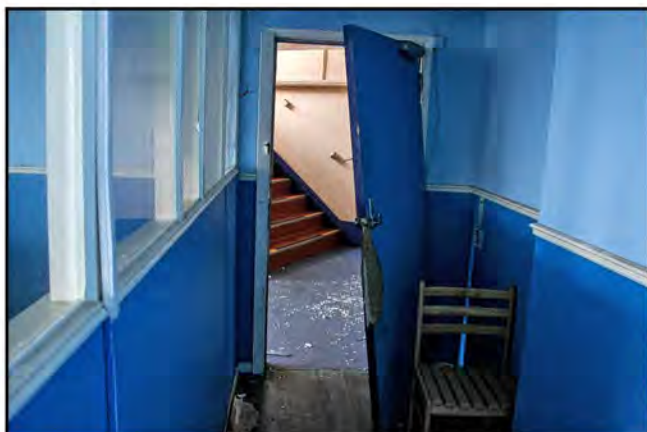




These pictures, all taken on 10th January 2018, show the result of further damage to the stadium, made possible as a result of Brandon Estates' complete failure to secure the site. During this visit, the local fire brigade were called out on several occasions, including at 2.30am on 8th January to extinguish a fire which destroyed a turnstile building. But for the vigilance of one local resident who made the 999 call, it could have been much worse.



More pictures, all taken on 10th January 2018 of the damage to the stadium. After the gypsies had left the site (on the 9th January), an abandoned puppy was found locked in an understand storage area.



In late January 2018, work finally began to put in place more robust measures to secure the site. The pictures below show that work to put in place proper earth bunds and dig trenches inside the 3 external gates was started.



On 6th February, Brandon Estates and Rugby Council appeared at Nuneaton Justice Centre for the hearing of the appeal of the Community Protection Notice.

The case was settled outside the court, with minor changes to the wording of the statement and Brandon Estates agreeing to pay Rugby Council's costs.

The notice stood and Brandon Estates were therefore required to comply with the terms of the notice.

We believe appealing the notice served in September was a delaying tactic by Brandon Estates, enabling further, significant damage to the stadium.

The revised wording of the notice is shown overleaf.



## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014 COMMUNITY PROTECTION NOTICE - AMENDMENT

The following requirement amends the respective numbered requirement as specified within the attached Community Protection Notice.

2. ***Use all reasonable endeavours to secure the site against unlawful access. To that end reasonable endeavours shall include:***
  - I. ***Maintenance and repair where necessary of all perimeter structures, building and security locks and similar apparatus located at the site as of 1 February 2018.***
  - II. ***Secondary security gates to the main entrance shall be modified in agreement with the Fire Service and Police and secured as agreed taking into account the Crime Prevention Design Document attached to this Notice.***
  - III. ***The perimeter and main entrance gates shall be upgraded to closed screening to obscure the site from view to any external party, with a separate access facility to any person having a legal right of access through land comprised within the main gates.***
  - IV. ***In so far as any such works as above are not currently in place they shall be completed within 28 days from 6 February 2018.***

The pictures below were taken on 16th February 2018 and the main gate (top left) with screening and an improved standard of padlock in place. The inner gate also has an improved padlock, however, the pillars are still not secured to the ground. The bottom pictures show earth bunds and trenches on the gates near Speedway Lane and in Speedway Lane.



It is our belief that had this work been carried out a year earlier, or at least after the very first incursion of gypsies (when very little damage was done), the stadium would not be in the condition it is today.

We also believe Brandon Estates should not benefit in any way through their failure to meet an obligation to secure the site and adversely affect the quality of life of local residents.

It is clear however that in the applicant's planning application (Sections 1.33 - 1.38 of the Viability NTS Document), they are attempting to benefit by claiming *"refurbishment costs would require an elongated repayment period that far exceeds typical commercial loan terms available for this purpose"*.

Their assumption is based upon any new potential owner having to take out a huge loan to refurbish the stadium. The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox Campaign Group put out an appeal for Tradesmen and Women to register with us, if they were willing to freely commit their time to rebuild the stadium in circumstances of it falling back into the hands of an owner committed to return it to its established use as a motorsport stadium.

The result of that appeal was astonishing, with more than 100 Tradesmen / Women, from all over the country, offering their services in the space of just 48 hours. This included generous offers by a local (Rugby based) business to replace all doors and windows free of charge and another businessman offering to replace the armco barrier, safety fence and air fence at his expense. The register of Tradesmen / Women is shown overleaf.

## TRADESMEN / WOMEN REGISTER

<p><b>ELECTRICIANS</b>            Andrew Edwards            Keith Walding            Dean Redmond            Rob Jones            Karl Roberts            Colin Whalley            Graham Harbud            Dale Bradshaw            Anthony Sykes            Tom Spencer            Rober Harrad            Billy Carter-Millis            Martin King            Ralph Wiggins            Richard Maltman</p>	<p><b>WELDERS / FABIRCATORS</b>            David O'Halloran            Daniel Manby            Anthony Sykes            Ashley Pointer</p> <p><b>BRICKLAYERS</b>            Nigel Bradshaw            Damien Jones            Simon Clarke</p> <p><b>ROOFERS</b>            Christian Spencer            John Maynard            Maik Parry</p>	<p><b>GLAZERS</b>            James Thackra            Paul Hines            John Whalley            Dylan Williams            Gary Mann            Trevor Clews</p>
<p><b>PLUMBERS</b>            Malcolm Barnes            Mark Osbourne            Anthony Sykes            Nigel Bradshaw            David Abberley            Neil Edwards            Mike Parry            Andy Whitehouse</p>	<p><b>CARPENTERS</b>            Nigel Flude            Martin Sheriden            John Harte            Mark Dimmer            Alastair Boneham            Simon Clarke</p>	<p><b>PLASTERER</b>            Chris Snell</p> <p><b>PAINTER / DECORATOR</b>            Anthony Milton            David Parker            Ashley Pointer            Ivor Barford</p>
<p><b>GAS ENG / HEATING</b>            Malcolm Barnes            Graham Harbud            David Abberley            Andy Whitehouse</p>	<p><b>H&amp;S / ENVIRONMENTAL</b>            Tim Wellbourne</p>	<p><b>FENCING</b>            David Parker            Mark Salmon</p>
<p><b>MAINTENANCE ENGINEERS</b>            Alan Eggleton            Gerald Freeman</p>	<p><b>CHARTERED SURVEYOR</b>            Matt Kirk</p> <p><b>PROJECT MANAGERS</b>            Phil Blackmore            Gareth Drew            Mark Dimmer            Andy Johnson            Robin Shaw            John Robinson            Iain Smith</p>	<p><b>GROUNDWORKS / LABOURER</b>            Christian Spencer            Colin Bunyard            Nick Turner            Paul Roberts</p> <p><b>PLANT AND MACHINERY</b>            Andrew Dudley            Kay Smith            Nigel Harry            Richard Clews</p> <p><b>FIRE ALARMS</b>            Steve Aston</p>

### NOTES

- In addition to the above, a further 48 people with various skills have registered to rebuild Brandon Stadium
- The addresses, email addresses and 'phone numbers of volunteers are all available
- The volunteers come from far and wide - Leicester, Towcester, Derby, Hereford, Northampton, Kidderminster, Gloucester, and even as far as Wales, Bridlington and Middlesex, as well as locally.
- Some offers of help include materials too, eg. John Whally (MD Nationwide Windows) will replace all windows and doors throughout the stadium, Nigel Harry (Director West Midland Golf Club) will replace the Armco Barrier, Safety Fence and Air Fence etc.

## SUMMARY

November 5th 2016	Stadium in fully functional, operational and viable condition. Normal winter work and standard health and safety updates required in order for racing to resume in March 2017
December 31st 2016	Stadium clean and tidy but with various fixtures and fittings removed following rental dispute. Previous owner/leasee repeatedly pledged to re-instate them at their own cost.
January 2017	Planning documents confirm owners regarded the stadium as “closed” despite public statements pronouncing that the stadium’s future could not be determined until the outcome of police/civil investigations.
June 2017	Minor damage suffered by stadium from first gypsy incursion. On-site security withdrawn and no improvement to entry restrictions.
July 2017	Further minor damage from second gypsy incursion. No change to security arrangements.
September 2017	Major damage and vandalism from third gypsy incursion. Warning Notice served by Rugby Council. With unsatisfactory changes to security arrangements, Community Protection Notice served, which was appealed pending court hearing in February 2018 – enabling plenty of time for further damage to take place.
January 2018	Two further damaging gypsy incursions requiring attendance from Fire Brigade with a turnstile block burnt down and more internal damage.
February 2018	Out-of-court settlement to the CPN, and finally more robust security measures put in place.

It is clear that with the vast majority of damage having taken place since Brandon Estates took control of the stadium on January 1, 2017, the escalated costs associated with returning it to a working sports venue are almost entirely down to the Applicant’s failure to fulfil their obligations to secure the site throughout 2017/early 2018.

This also had a hugely detrimental effect on the lives of the local residents over that period of time.

We consider it totally unacceptable that Brandon Estates should be allowed to ‘benefit’ from this series of events having inherited a venue which was perfectly capable of continuing to stage its motorsport events, and would indeed have done so but for their decision to close it down and then seek a change of use.

To grant planning permission for the site to be redeveloped would encourage developers throughout the country to benefit, by similarly failing in their moral and legal obligations to properly secure premises.

**Appendix 4**

**Copy of accountants' letter dated 7 February 2018.**

Wednesday, 7 February 2018

Geoff Davis  
Save Coventry Speedway Forum

Dear Mr Davis

**Coventry Racing Club Ltd**

We have acted for Coventry Racing Club Ltd since 2008. We can confirm that in every year since 2008 the company has run speedway and stockcars at Coventry Stadium and only in the period 2009 – 2011 the company also ran greyhound racing.

In the years when greyhound racing was run the company made considerable losses. In all other years (i.e. only speedway and stockcar racing conducted by the company) the company has made a profit.

Yours sincerely

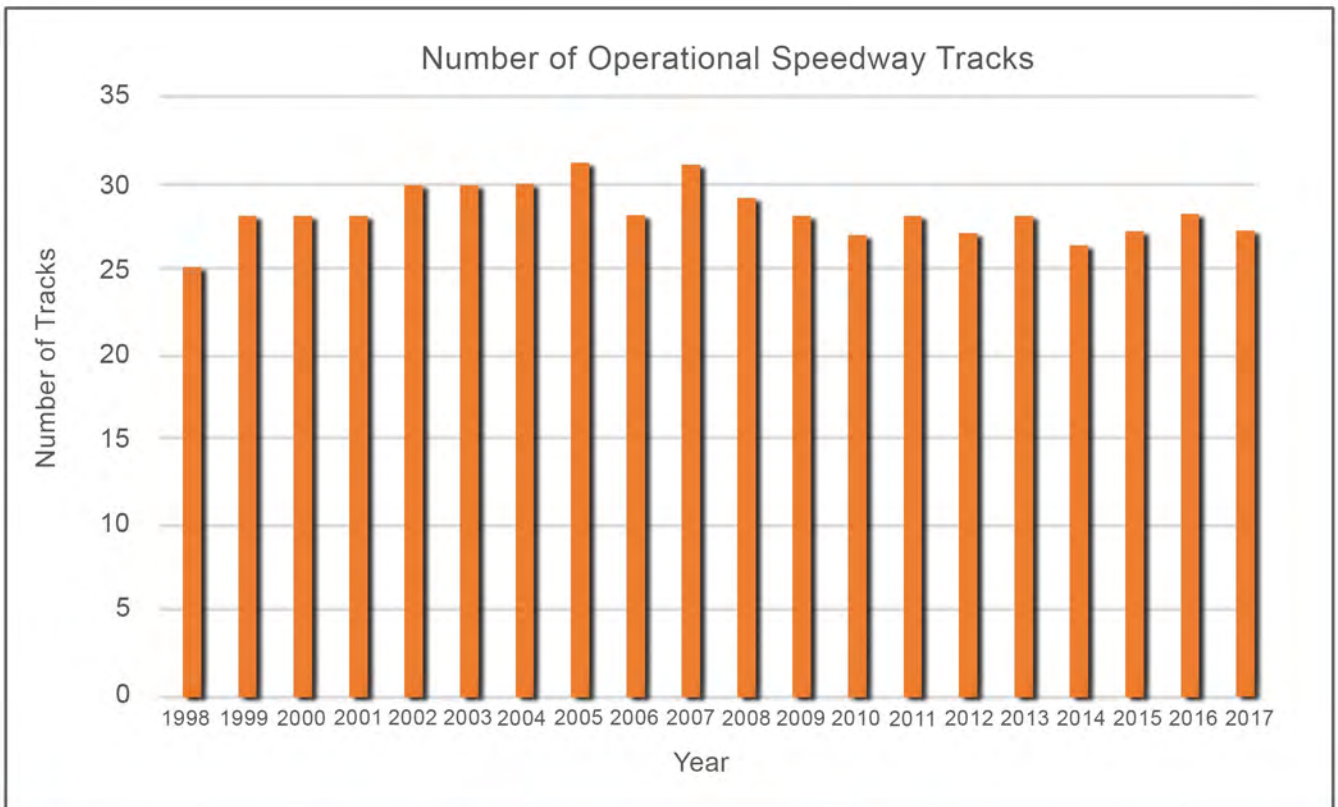


**N G Wilson** MA(Oxon) FCA CF FRSA  
Director



## **Appendix 5**

**Analysis of the number of UK Speedway stadia operational from 1998 to 2017.**



## **Appendix 6**

**Brandon Stadium - A brief history of this iconic stadium, one of the most important motorsport venues in the U.K.**

# SAVE COVENTRY SPEEDWAY



## BRANDON STADIUM – A BRIEF HISTORY OF THIS ICONIC STADIUM, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MOTORSPORT VENUES IN THE UK

### Introduction

Brandon Stadium, which is also known as Coventry Stadium is located on the A428 Rugby Road about six miles to the east of Coventry in Brandon, Warwickshire. The site falls within Rugby Borough Council's area and lies within designated Green Belt.

The stadium is the home of the Coventry Bees Speedway team and is also the country's most important venue hosting BriSCA Formula One Stock Car Racing.

In addition, the stadium hosted many other forms of motorsport, including midget car, sidecars,, quad bikes, bangers, Formula 2 Stock cars, mini stox and go-carts.

For 21 years, up until the stadium closed, it was also the home of Rugby Rider Training School, with thousands of motorcyclists trained safely within the confines of the stadium.

The following sections provide (1) a chronological listing of the key milestones in the history of the venue followed by a summary of the key events, achievements and facts for (2) Speedway and (3) Formula One Stock Car Racing. Section (4) adds some other points which show how the intensity and variety of activities has grown to the present day.



Coventry Bees in action at Brandon



Formula 1 Stock Cars racing at Brandon

## 1. Milestones

**1928:** Brandon Stadium's inaugural speedway meeting took place on 29 September 1928. Speedway has continued to take place at the stadium ever since apart from a break during the course of the Second World War.

**1929:** Coventry City take place in the first Speedway team match-up with West Ham. This marked the start of league racing in Speedway which continued at Brandon until 1936. Coventry Speedway team compete initially in the Southern League 1929-31 and then the National League 1932-33.

**1937:** Midget Car Racing is introduced at Brandon and runs until 1939.

**1939-45:** The stadium was used as workshops by aircraft companies.

**Post War:** The Sanderson family are the majority owners with Charles Ochitree holding a minority share.

**1948:** The 'Coventry Bees' Speedway Team formed and the stadium re-opened on May 1 after closing for the duration of WW2. Coventry's opponents were Hanley. The Brandon terraces were packed with 27,000 people for the first ever staging of the 'Brandonapolis'.

**1950:** The company is known as Midlands Sports Stadia following the acquisition of Leicester Stadium. Leicester was sold to Barratts for redevelopment in 1984 with a promise of a replacement stadium which, for Speedway did not happen until 2011. The followers of Stock Car racing have not been so lucky; they are still waiting for a replacement!

**1953:** The Bees win their first League title as champions of the National League Division Two, the first of nine such titles (the most recent in 2010).



Above right: The programme for the first ever Midget Car Racing in May 1939 and above, the programme for the first ever meeting at Brandon in September 1928 opened by the Mayor of Coventry Fred Lee and Mayoress Mrs Lewis

**1954:** The first ever Stock Car meeting takes place at Brandon following the introduction of the sport into the UK at London's New Cross Stadium on Good Friday. BriSCA F1 Stock Car Racing has continued uninterrupted to the present day. Described by the BRISCA.COM website as, "Without doubt the historic centrepiece of BriSCA Formula 1. The impressive Brandon arena has hosted all the sports major titles since 1954 and the traditional first Saturday of the month has become the social gathering of the sport for drivers and fans given it's central location."

**1956:** The British Stock Car Drivers Association was formed.

**1957:** BriSCA, the association of promoters was formed and the Stock Car Racing Board of Control created. The promoters of the racing at Coventry were one of the founder members of this organisation. There was also agreement that BriSCA would only use drivers of the Drivers Association. From the initial explosion in 1954 things started to settle down, tracks opened and closed but racing rules were introduced and the cars became more refined, star drivers started to emerge.

**1958:** Brandon commences running its events for BriSCA Formula One Stock Cars 'on the first Saturday of every month April to November'. This tradition attracted the largest Stock Car crowds in the country, right up until the closure of the stadium at the end of 2016

**1960:** Brandon stages the BriSCA F1 World Championship Final. The World Final is the most important event on the annual race calendar always attracting a capacity crowd. Since 1960 The World Final has been held at Brandon on 21 occasions.

**1967:** The Bees win Speedway's Knockout Cup for the first time.



Above right: The programme for the first ever Coventry Bees meeting against Hanley in 1948. Above: The first ever Stock Car meeting in June 1954, won by Percy 'Hellcat' Brine who's car, No. 27 can be seen in the background.

**1968:** The Bees, led by Bees legend Nigel Boocock are crowned the champions of the British Speedway League, the first of eight such titles.

**1968:** Alan Sanderson passes away leaving Charles Ochiltree the key decision-maker. Phase 1 of a new grandstand was completed. It is interesting to note that the new grandstand was built before the stadium site was confirmed as lying within Warwickshire's green belt.



Above: The 1968 Bees team, led by Brandon legend Nigel Boocock, that won the British League Championship and right, Phase 1 of a new grandstand.

**1977:** ITV Central introduce regular speedway coverage on Monday evenings and Brandon staged a Testimonial for Nigel Boocock.

**1978:** Greyhounds Racing at Brandon took place for the first time on 19 September 1978, fourteen years after the closure of the Lythalls Lane track in north-east Coventry, following its redevelopment for housing. Greyhound racing continued until 1986.

The Bees, led by Danish superstar Ole Olsen, are crowned British League Champions.

**1979:** The Bees, again led by Ole Olsen, retain the British League Championship



Above: The 1978 Bees team, led by Dane Ole Olsen, that won the British League Championship. They retained the title the following year. Right, a packed Brandon attends the Nigel Boocock Testimonial in 1977

**1987:** Bees are Champions of Britain for the fourth time and once again, retain the title the following year (1988).

**1991:** Brandon Stadium staged the Under-21 Speedway World Championship Final.

**1993:** The Speedway World Team Cup Final held for the first time at Brandon.

**1995:** One of the greatest characters and most popular drivers in BriSCA Formula One Stock Car Racing, Johnny Goodhall, is tragically killed in a racing incident at Brandon Stadium in July 1995

**1997:** The Bees are one of ten teams to race in the newly formed British Elite Speedway League as the top league in the UK.

**1997:** Rugby Rider Training School is established to train motorcyclists in the safe confines of the stadium, prior to them venturing on to the roads. A workshop was established in one of the hangers to train motorcyclists in motorcycle maintenance.

**1998:** Charles Ochiltree the promoter of both the Speedway and Stock Car Racing passes away. His son Martin Ochitree took on the promoting duties and recruits Colin Pratt as co-promoter.

**1998:** The Stadium is venue for the Speedway Grand Prix of Great Britain, the first of three consecutive stagings. The event transferred to the Millenium Stadium, Cardiff in 2001 and has remained there ever since.



Top left: The Bees, led by Dane Tommy Knudsen, win the British League Championship in 1987. They retained the title in 1988.

Top right: Charles Ochiltree, pictured in 1997 with son Martin and Bees' new signing Greg Hancock, died in 1998. Above: A capacity crowd at Brandon for the 1998 British Speedway Grand Prix



**1999:** Regular SKY TV coverage of Elite League Speedway, including events at Brandon commences (and continued right up to the closure of Brandon in 2016).

**2003:** The stadium and promoting rights to both Speedway and Stock Car Racing were acquired by Avtar Sandhu.

**2004:** The new owners at the stadium produce a master plan proposing four phases of development at the site:

Phase 1 – Dog racing infrastructure to make the track the only one in the UK built to international greyhound racing standards and a new bar in the void beneath the main grandstand, new executive boxes and the new 230-seat restaurant. The refurbishment cost was reported to be £1m

Phase 2 - This provided for the Conference Centre, built alongside the car park in the location of the current Guest entrance.

Phase 3 - This allows for a 250 stall Sunday Market located in the main pit area.

Phase 4 – Construction of a sports club.

Of the proposals only Phase 1 was successfully completed.

**2004:** Despite new investment in the stadium, the Bees finish bottom of the British Elite League

**2005:** Bottom of the league in April, the Bees make team changes resulting and an incredible winning run to capture the British Elite League Championship. It was their first British Championship title in 17 years.



Top: A Dane, an American, a German, a Pole, a Finn an Australian, a Swede and two Brits constitute the Bees team that won the British Elite League Championship in 2005.

Above: Brandon, already one of the finest stadiums in the country, is transformed by Avtar Sandhu, including hospitality suites and a 230 seater restaurant.

**2007:** The Bees make a 'clean sweep', capturing all three domestic competitions to win the famous 'Treble' of Elite League Championship, Knock Out Cup and Craven Shield, making it their most successful season ever.

**2010:** The Bees once again capture the Elite League Championship. After reaching the Play-Off's, they defeat Peterborough home and away in the semi-final to set up a Grand Final clash with Poole Pirates. A packed Brandon stadium saw the Bees win the home leg and then incredibly beat the previously unbeaten Pirates in what will go down as one of the greatest nights in the history of the Brandon Bees.

**2011:** Coventry and Peterborough promotions are involved in bitter dispute with speedway's governing body, the BSPA. (British Speedway Promoters Association). Differences are eventually resolved at the eleventh hour enabling both clubs to take their place in the Elite League 2011 season. Avtar Sandhu believes for the benefit of the club, he should step aside and puts the speedway promoting rights up for sale.

**2011:** In September, the promoting rights for the Bees is bought by Peterborough based businessman Mick Horton. Long serving Colin Pratt remains as co-promoter (the BSPA requires each club to have two promoters). Avtar Sandhu retains ownership of the stadium and the stock car promoting rights.



Clockwise from top left: The Bees complete the 'Treble', winning all three domestic trophies; Celebrations as the Bees clinch the first of the three trophies on an unforgettable night at Brandon; Co-promoters, Colin Pratt and Peter Oakes with club owner Avtar Sandhu with the three trophies; The Bees capture the 2010 Championship after home and away victories in the play-off final against the Poole Pirates.

**2012:** The Coventry Evening Telegraph reported (13 November) on a legal wrangle involving the HMRC who were owed money involving 50% of ownership of Brandon Stadium. It is understood the HMRC involvement did not involve Avtar Sandhu who was previously thought to be the sole owner.

**2013:** A second Speedway team based at Brandon Stadium, Coventry Storm, is formed to compete in the third tier of British Speedway, the National League.

**2013:** Regular TV coverage of BriSCA Formula One Stock Car Racing commences on Premier Sports.

**2013:** Avtar Sandhu sells the stadium after the bank calls in loans taken out against the stadium. It is sold to Tony Copeland but a contemporaneous sale puts it into the hands of Investin Brandon within the space of 24 hours. Company House records show Monaco based businessman John Downer as the 'Person with significant control' in Investin Brandon. It was incorporated on 29th January 2014.

**2014:** The Mayor of Rugby, Tony Gillias, along with former World Speedway Champion Peter Collins unveil a plaque to honour former rider Jack Parker who lived in the town.

**2014:** Investin Brandon changes its name to Brandon Estates and in August is re-registered in Jersey.

**2014:** Planning Consultants Framptons announce an outline planning application is being prepared for a residential development on the site at Brandon Stadium. An exhibition to display the proposals to build 250 houses on the site was held in Binley Woods Village Hall on 18 October. Feedback from this public consultation was never put in the public domain. It was also announced that motor sports at the stadium would cease at the end of the 2016 season.

**2014:** In response to the redevelopment proposals the 'Save Coventry Speedway' supporters group was formed. The group brings together followers of both Speedway and Stock Car Racing providing a united voice to ensure the continuity of both sports.

**2015:** Save Coventry Speedway Group hold a public meeting on 23 July to discuss the redevelopment proposals. Framptons and Coventry Stadium decline to attend but Speedway promoter Mick Horton attends along with Councillor Stokes, Leader of Rugby Borough Council and local Councillors. The local residents strongly support the stadium and the meeting resolves that an application be made to seek designation of the stadium as an 'Asset of Community Value' should be made as should early representations regarding the matter in relation to the review of the Rugby Local Plan.



Right: The audience gathers for the 'Save Brandon Stadium' meeting held in Binley Woods on 23 July 2015.

Far right: A view across the Speedway pits showing SKY TV broadcasting live Elite League Speedway action.



**2015:** The 500th meeting for BriSCA Formula One Stock Cars at Brandon takes place in November. Since 1954 around 5,500 events for the Formula One Stock Cars have been held countrywide, thus showing the significance of the stadium to the sport.

**2016:** Having emigrated to Australia after his retirement, Nigel Boocock's ashes are brought back to Brandon. A moving ceremony was held at the stadium in memory of one of the Bees greatest ever riders. Forty years after his last race at Brandon, a packed grandstand witnessed eulogies and the scattering of Nigel's ashes onto the famous Brandon track surface. This event, as much as any other, illustrates the importance that the racing at Brandon plays in the lives of many, many people.

**2016:** What may come to be the last ever Greyhound Racing event at Brandon took place on 16 January. The Coventry Evening Telegraph reported that "Despite having two more years to run on their lease, organisers feel the lack of longevity will put off potential advertisers."

**2016:** Jeremy Heaver appears on local radio to explain that a new site to relocate the Speedway and Stock Car Racing had been found and that negotiations were ongoing. At this time he was not in a position to reveal the exact location of the proposed eco-stadium.

**2016:** The season opens with the Bees Elite League meeting against Poole on 18th March. Coventry Storm open in the National Development League on 28th March, with the first Formula 1 Stock Cars meeting taking place on the traditional first Saturday of the month on 2nd April.

**2016:** Startrax host their first (of a further seven) car race events of the 2016 season on 12 March. The meeting features seven different race classes including BriSCA Formula Two Stock Cars, V8 Hot Stox, 1300 Stock cars with support.

**2016:** On 26 May Save Coventry Stadium hold its second public meeting at the Scarman Conference Centre at the University of Warwick. Councillor Michael Stokes, the Leader of Rugby Borough Council and Mick Horton, Coventry Bees promoter are the guest speakers. The meeting vows to keep up the pressure to retain Speedway and Stock Car Racing.

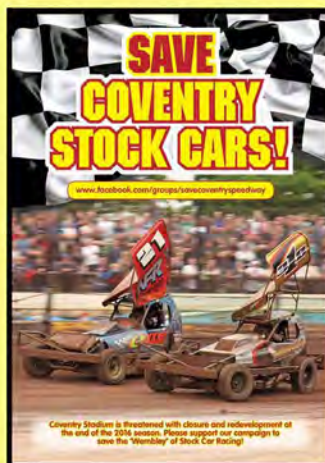
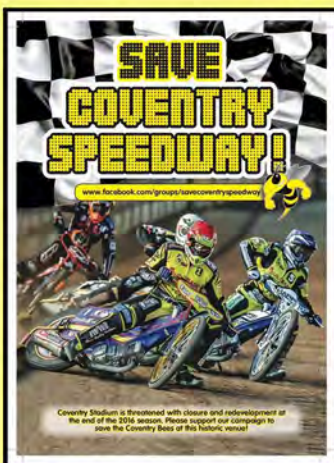


Eric Boocock addresses the large crowd attending a service to pay tribute to his brother, Bees legend Nigel Boocock. His ashes were taken one final lap around the track, 40 years after he finished racing at Brandon and then buried under the start / finish line. The Coventry Telegraph gave it extensive coverage, calling it "Memories of Booney".

2016: The Bees finish the season in a lowly seventh place, with the final speedway meeting, the Elite League Riders Championship taking place on 8th October

2016: The Formula 1 Stock Car World Final takes place in September in front of 11,500 fans and the final Stock Car meeting of the season takes place on 5th November. It was the final event staged at the famous old stadium as the doors closed after 89 years.

2016: Rugby Rider Training School vacates the site. During the 21 years of operating out of the stadium, the 7 full time employees trained thousands of riders. In it's busiest period, 1200 motorcyclists were trained each year.



Top: The second public meeting held at University of Warwick in May 2016

Above: The flyers and stickers produced to support the campaign and right, local driver Nigel Harry painted his car as a tribute to the late Nigel Boocock. Nigel's father, John was himself a former Bees rider and rode in the same era as Boocock.

Below: The young speedway stars of the future and right, it's a family sport where youngsters mix with their heroes.



## 2 STADIUM STATISTICS

### Meetings staged at Brandon

#### Speedway Meetings

- Pre-war 150
- Post war 1902
  - ▶ British Championship Finals 31
  - ▶ Brandonapolis 33
  - ▶ World Cup Finals 2
  - ▶ World Championship Grand Prix 3
  - ▶ International Meetings 21

#### Formula 1 Stock Car Meetings

- Post war 508
  - ▶ British Championship Finals 12
  - ▶ World Stock Car Finals 21
  - ▶ Grand National Championships 4
  - ▶ Trust Fund 9
  - ▶ World of Shale Championships 3

Total\* 2560  
(Excludes Midget Cars, Sidecars, F2 Stock Cars, Bangers etc)

### Coventry Bees Major Honours

- Elite League Champions
  - ▶ 2005, 2007, 2010
- British League Champions (forerunner to Elite League)
  - ▶ 1968, 1978, 1979, 1987, 1988
- Knockout Cup Winners
  - ▶ 1967, 2006, 2007
- Craven Shield Winners
  - ▶ 1997, 2000, 2007, 2008
- League Cup
  - ▶ 1981, 1985, 1987
- Elite League Pairs Championship
  - ▶ 2008, 2010
- Midland Cup
  - ▶ 1952, 1960, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1982
- National League Division Two Champions
  - ▶ 1953



Brandon always drew the biggest crowds of any club in the country. Above: Crowds through the ages.

## MISCELLANEOUS SPEEDWAY STATISTICS

### British Champions who've raced for the Bees

Steve Bastable  
Kelvin Tatum (MBE) 2X  
Simon Wigg 2X  
Joe Screen  
Andy Smith 3X  
Scott Nicholls 7X  
Chris Harris 3X  
Danny King

### World Champions who've raced for the Bees

Jack Young 2X (Australian)  
Ronnie Moore 2X (Australian)  
Ole Olsen 3X (Danish)  
Hans Nielsen 4X (Danish)  
Billy Hamill (American)  
Greg Hancock 4X (American)

### Different Nationalities to race for the Bees

American	7
Australian	29
Czechoslovakian	3
Czech Republic	5
Danish	19
East German	1
English	173
Finnish	5
German	3
New Zealand	7
Polish	15
Russian	2
Scottish	6
Swedish	12



Speedway and Stock Car crowds draw family audiences, often with three generations attending.

### 3 MISCELLANEOUS STOCK CAR STATISTICS

- Brandon is the “Wembley” Stadium of BriSCA Formula One Stock Car Racing. All of the Sport’s major championship events have been held at Brandon
- Stock Car meetings at Brandon are the most prestigious of the race calendar. Average car turnouts are higher at Brandon than any other venue with meetings usually attracting between 60 and 70 F1 competitors.
- Coventry is the venue at which most drivers in all other race classes aspire to race. BriSCA Formula One meetings usually have two supporting race classes which will usually more than double the race-car count.
- Only one other venue has staged more events for BriSCA F1 Stock Cars than Brandon, the tarmac Northampton track at Brafield-on-the-Green.
- The promoter Startrax also rents the venue for a series of seven additional car racing events featuring other race classes. These events almost double the number of car race meetings and each of these will feature up to seven different classes each attracting around 175-200 competitors.
- Overall, it is possible to see that Brandon, from the car racing perspective, is a very important and intensely used venue for participative sport with the number of different drivers racing in a given year running into many hundreds.
- Crowds at Brandon are by far and away the biggest of any venue in the country. The crowd for the penultimate Stock Car event in 2016, was 11,500 people

### 4 OTHER POINTS

- Brandon is the most important and intensely used sports venue in Rugby.
- Brandon Stadium is the most important tourist venue in Rugby Borough.
- It is the only venue for motorsport in the Coventry area even though Coventry is at the heart of the UK automotive industry.
- Brandon can be seen as a venue at the northern end of the UK’s Motorsport Corridor. Motorsport is a major contributor to the British and local economy. Venues are integral to the continuing success of this industry.
- Both Speedway and Stock Car Racing are attractive to a very wide audience but importantly are accessible as participatory sports to the man-on-the-street (or women and children).
- The loss of racing has had a detrimental impact on both Speedway and Stock Car racing schedules.





A selection of pictures taken across the decades at Brandon. It's a famous old stadium where generations of families have stood on the terraces. As one supporter put it, "To knock down Brandon would be like knocking down Coventry Cathedral".

**Appendix 7**

**The Campaign Group's objections made to the local plan review.**



## **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.

## **Appendix 8**

### **Examples of major press coverage.**

- a) The Mail on Sunday feature by their Chief Sports Writer Oliver Holt on 28 January 2018
- b) Press release from Mark Pawsey MP 6 November 2017
- c) Speedway Star independent investigation into the planning application, written by respected sports journalist Peter Oakes.

# Oliver Holt

oliver.holt@mailonsunday.co.uk

SPORTS COMMENTATOR OF THE YEAR

CHIEF SPORTS WRITER

## Vital venues of our sporting history must not be left to rot

**A**T the entrance to the Coventry Stadium, a brick-built turnstile block lies in ruins. It was burned down a few weeks ago by vandals. Charred beams criss-cross the rubble. Walk on and broken glass crunches underfoot. Puddles pockmark the forecourt where cars once parked. "Dangerous Site. Dangerous Structure," a sign nailed to barriers at the stadium's front gate reads.

For most sports fans, that moment when you glimpse an arena for the first time — a football pitch under lights perhaps, the majesty of a cricket ground, the cloistered beauty of Centre Court or the dramatic presence of the Eau Rouge section of the Spa racetrack — is an instant that makes your heart leap and your pulse race.

It's a realisation that something magical happens here. That sport happens here. That memories are made here. That there has been great happiness here. That there has been despair and that all of it has been shared by generations.

At Edgeley Park, the home of Stockport County, there is a banner behind a goal that reads: The Scarf my Father Wore. It hints at an arena's sense of history and aura. It tells you that you are somewhere that helps to bind the community together with civic pride.

But at the Coventry Stadium, where greets of speedway such as Ole Olsen once rode for the Coventry Bees, the magic has gone. Walk through the tunnel and gaze around a place that once housed nearly 30,000 fans for its biggest meetings, and there is only a sense of sadness and loss. Sport has fled this place, chased away by developers, and left it bereft.

This was a magical place once. At one time, it was the finest speedway stadium in the country. It staged the biggest and most prestigious meetings for speedway and stock car racing, including 31 British finals, two World Cup finals, three British GPs, 21 Test matches and 21 World Stock Car Championships. All that feels like the distant past now.

An overturned metal chair squats on what used to be the greyhound track. Weeds poke through the dirt. Bits of piping and a rusting saw have been discarded where the dogs used to run. The door to the hut that once housed the people who operated the Tote on race nights sits ajar.

A stray dog, abandoned by travellers, was found cowering in



Magic memories will fade and die if our arenas fall victim to developers

CHANGING TIMES: The once-popular Coventry Stadium has fallen into decline (left inset)

PHIL NEVILLE made a mistake when he cracked a joke on Twitter six years ago about domestic violence and it came back to haunt him when he was named the manager of the England women's team last week. It was a stupid joke about a subject that affects many people deeply made by a gentle, honest man who is about as far away from being a misogynist as it is possible to be. Many intelligent voices pointed out that they were far more concerned about Neville's lack of experience in the women's game than his sense of humour. It is those people to whom he needs to prove a point.

more it decays, the louder are the voices saying that it is no longer a viable site for speedway and stock cars and that it should be reclassified as land for housing.

And then the travellers visit again and more damage is done and the cycle of dilapidation and neglect and frustration continues.

Save Coventry Speedway has been set up to oppose the development plans and try to restore speedway to the stadium. It believes that there is at least one buyer who would be prepared to plough money into the arena to make it feasible to stage speedway and stock car meetings again.

"We are aware that damage to the stadium itself has occurred at the most recent 'visit'," the campaigners said in a recent statement, "and this could in fact be seen to strengthen the case Brandon Estates are attempting to build, that the site is derelict and that redevelopment should be made a priority."

On Friday afternoon, the developers submitted a planning application. I hope Rugby Borough Council do the right thing again. I hope the application is rejected and that the developers are told never to come back. I hope they are told that that land belongs to speedway, as it has done for nearly 100 years, and that it should be returned to speedway.

And I hope that at some point in the future, we start to pay our old sporting stadiums the respect they deserve. We are a proud sporting nation and these arenas are part of our architectural heritage.

To many of us, they are a lot more than bricks and mortar. They are homes to our memories and they deserve protection from those who would destroy them.

Coventry Speedway and as he stares at the stadium wasting away, he remembers how the Friday night lights, the smell of methanol, the noise of the engines and the hum of the crowd filled the air.

He points to his left and the terraces beyond the fourth turn and says he recently received an email from a woman in her twenties who had watched speedway from those steps with her father when she was young.

She had come back recently to visit and burst into tears when she saw what had happened. Her father had died and she felt part of their shared history was now dying too.

There are still tyre marks in the dirt. Some kids forced their way in a couple of weeks ago and staged their own impromptu races.

There used to be 20-25 speedway

meetings a year here and stock cars were a fixture, too. In fact, the stadium was the country's leading stock car racing venue.

But the kids on their bikes provided the only action the old stadium, which opened in 1928, has seen since November 5, 2016, when it staged its last stock car meeting.

Two months earlier, 11,500 fans packed in for stock cars' Formula One world final.

The story of its fall into disuse will be familiar to sports fans who have seen the homes of their clubs bought by property developers.

The stadium is built on land designated for sporting use but that has not stopped the developers, Brandon Estates, releasing plans for 137 homes to be constructed on the site. And so there is an impasse.

As the impasse continues, the stadium decays. And the

the hut last week. Beyond the greyhound track, it is still possible to make out the outline of where the world's best speedway riders used to compete.

The track is also known as the Brandon Stadium, after the nearest village, and the Brandonopolis meeting attracted 29,000 people to this part of the Midlands.

Jeff Davies, a lifelong speedway fan and the track photographer at the stadium for 33 years, is leading a campaign group called Save

### Why is football blasé about drug-testing?

FOOTBALL often gives the impression it thinks it is too high and mighty to have to pay attention to the whereabouts rule for drug-testing.

We expect athletes and cyclists to abide by the rule faithfully and we heap opprobrium on them when they miss a test and say they didn't hear their doorbell or they

were asleep in their hotel room.

And yet when Alexis Sanchez (right) missed a test last week because he was in the middle of completing his move from Arsenal to Manchester United, English football still gives the impression it was ridiculous to expect anyone to know where he was.

"It's just a bad day for him to be tested," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. Silly us. We'll try to pick a good day for Arsenal next time, shall we?

That kind of reasoning just doesn't cut it. Football's attitude to anti-doping is an arrogant mess. It's about time it was given a wake-up call.







## **Mark Pawsey MP**

*Member of Parliament for Rugby*

***Rugby through and through***



*For Immediate Release*

## **Campaign to save Coventry Bees goes to Parliament**

***Rugby MP Mark Pawsey joined the campaigners at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Speedway***

**6<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

The campaign to keep beloved speedway team the Coventry Bees racing at their home in Brandon travelled to Parliament to attend the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Motorcycle Speedway's annual reception.

Local MP Mark Pawsey joined Jeff Davies and other members of Save Coventry Speedway at Westminster, where the campaign has received support from MPs and supporters of speedway from around the country. Mark has been an active supporter of Save Coventry Speedway since the group was formed after the Bees future was threatened by the dispute at their home in Brandon Stadium. The group aims to ensure the Bees return to SGB Premiership racing next year and secure the 89 year old club's long-term survival.

Brandon stadium, which has seen racing there since the early days of the sport in the 1920's, is currently at the centre of an ownership dispute. Recently, proposals have been shown by Brandon Estates to turn the site of Brandon Stadium into a housing development, which would end the hopes of seeing the Coventry Bees return to racing there.

During the reception, Mark spoke about the legacy of the Coventry Bees for the local area and, as Secretary for the All-Party Parliamentary Group, presented former Bees rider Scott Nicholls with the Outstanding Contribution to Speedway award.

Speaking after the All-Party Parliamentary Group's reception, Mark said:

"Speedway is a fantastic sport and we are very lucky to have had the iconic Coventry Bees based in Brandon. I grew up in Binley Woods and I remember going to enjoy racing there with friends and family when I was young. Speedway is a great family evening out and you often see three generations of fans watching from the terraces."

Mark continued:

"It was clear at the reception that Save Coventry Speedway enjoys significant support from the speedway community to see them return to racing. I will continue to work with Save Coventry Speedway and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Motorcycle Speedway to try and ensure that we can retain speedway at Coventry and preserve the stadium for future generations."

Jeff Davies of Save Coventry Speedway added:

"The Save Coventry Speedway campaign group are extremely grateful to Mr Pawsey, firstly for the invitation to attend the event and secondly, for making the plight of the Coventry Bees the core of his speech. He spoke very passionately about the sport and the significance of the Bees to the Borough of Rugby and Binley Woods and made a plea to the large gathering of people including many of the sport's administrators, to do everything they could to support our campaign. To have the ongoing support of Mr Pawsey is really important to us and the thousands of people who have lost their sport."



Seven times British Champion and captain of the Bees 'Treble' winning team of 2007 Scott Nicholls (on bike left) and Colin Pratt, former team manager and promoter (on bike right) with Save Coventry Speedway campaign members and Rugby MP Mark Pawsey (centre)



Rugby and Bulkington MP Mark Pawsey addresses attendees of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Motorcycle Speedway's Annual Reception

**ENDS**

Notes to editors:

Photos provided by kind permission of Jeff Davies, Save Coventry Speedway

Press Contact: Yousef Dahmash

Tel: 01788 579499

Email: [yousef.dahmash@parliament.uk](mailto:yousef.dahmash@parliament.uk)

# OFF THE BEATEN TR



## COMPILED BY PETER OAKES SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

**F**ANS have until the end of the month to present the case for a future for Coventry Stadium.

And Save Coventry Speedway are gearing up to step up their fight to prevent one of the country's most iconic venues being demolished and lost forever.

Rugby Borough Council have posted on their own website the application from Brandon Estates, the stadium's current owners, including full details of their desire to build 137 new homes (including 40 per cent for social housing) on the site where there has been motorsport since September, 1928.

The Save Coventry Speedway group insist they will never give up in their bid to see the Bees back at Brandon.

They will mount major opposition and are ready to strenuously dispute the developers' claims – in their lengthy planning submission – that the stadium is totally unviable and there is no one who would be willing to promote there in the future.

Perhaps the biggest bombshell of all in the disclosure documents is the fact that promoter Mick Horton told them he had lost money in each of the five seasons he promoted at Brandon.

He had taken over the speedway rights of a club that had won 11 major honours, including three Elite League championships since the turn of the Millennium, towards the end of 2011 but failed to win a single trophy during his years in charge.

And now it appears, according to the official submissions, that he also lost money every season, despite the Bees being among the best supported clubs in the country.

Records at Companies House are at variance with that assertion



and Horton, who has also promoted at Peterborough and Mildenhall, was insisting right up until the moment – on Sunday, February 25 last year – that the British Speedway Promoters' Association refused to allow the Bees to race out of Leicester, that he wanted to take the team back to Brandon.

The extent of Horton's alleged losses aren't given in any detail but emerged when he agreed to liaise with Brandon Estates' planning consultants Turley to provide financial information that, ultimately, is one of the main platforms in their case that the stadium cannot be financially viable, either currently or in the future.

Whether Mick was aware how the information he supplied is open to question but there is no doubt that it is being used to the detriment of any campaign to restore the stadium as a motorsports venue.

The stadium was built in 1928 and staged its first speedway event at the end of September.

The venue was a rarity in that it was built for speedway rather than greyhound racing, although the dogs would come along later, but much later.

League racing was held at what was known as Brandon Stadium

between 1929 and 1933 and open meetings in 1934 and 1936.

A series of midget car events used the venue for three seasons leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

The British Army commandeered the site – as they did the majority of stadia up and down the country – throughout hostilities, although bikes returned on May 1, 1948 and ran continuously until the end of 1966.

For the bulk of its post-war existence, the stadium was owned by Midlands Sports Stadiums with Charles Ochiltree a company director and in charge of the day-to-day-running.

He introduced stock-car racing in 1954 and greyhound racing in 1978.

While motorsport thrived at Brandon, the dogs never acquired the popularity with spectators and has been held intermittently in more recent times.

Mr. Ochiltree died in 1998 but the stadium remained within his family, with son Martin promoting both speedway and stocks until selling to Avtar Sandhu in 2003.

Brandon was for more than two decades the traditional home of the British Final – regularly attracting crowds of around 20,000 – and hosted the British Grand Prix

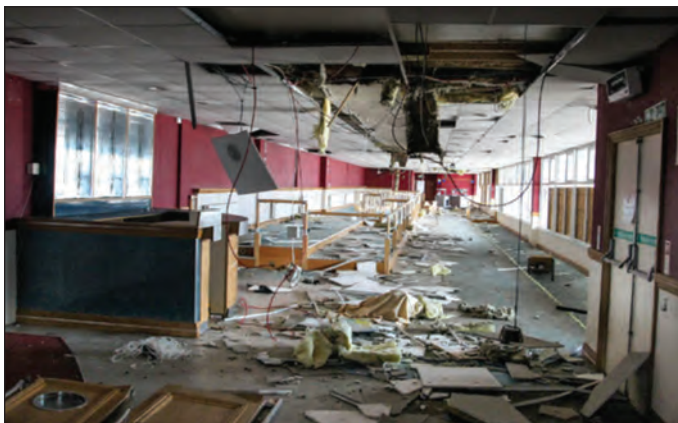
## It happened THIS WEEK



- THE Speedway Control Board rejected appeals from four new tracks over the BSPA's decision to turn down their applications for membership of the Second Division. As a consolation, open licences were granted to Ashington, Barrow and Motherwell, but a bid to stage racing at Chesterton (Stoke) was blocked completely (Barrow would subsequently secure league membership later in the year via the back door when they took over West Ham's team and licence in mid-season.)
- IVOR Brown, co-promoter at both Long Eaton and Scunthorpe, secured planning permission from the local council to introduce speedway to Wakefield's Greyhound Stadium.
- A TOP-SCORING 17-point haul from Bert Harkins, with 16-point contributions from both Nigel Boocock and Malcolm Simmons, helped the British Lions to a big 77-31 victory over Australia in the final and deciding Test in Perth, which clinched a 4-3 series win for the tourists.

Week-ending February 12

# 1972





between 1998 and 2000 and the World Team Cup Final in both 1993 and 2000.

It was also the ideal venue for the F1 Stock-Car World Championship, the most recent being in 2016 when Mick Horton was among the invited spectators.

Few current speedway tracks have a more storied history than Brandon but it has lain empty for the last 15 months or so.

The Turley report – which was initially omitted from the planning application documents put on line by Rugby Borough Council and only added after representations from Save Coventry Speedway – states that the ‘contents still exclude information that is

commercially sensitive and inappropriate for disclosure on public record’.

There are no actual figures included for the profits and loss accounts from the stadium itself, which leased the speedway operation to Horton for the last six years of racing, or stock-car racing which was promoted by the stadium.

Their role in the planning application is apparent, the report stating: “Turley has been appointed by Brandon Estates Limited to objectively assess, and report upon, the financial viability of the operation of the Coventry Stadium.

“The assessment extends to an analysis of historic and forecasted

financial trading at the subject premises utilising published annual accounts and estimated trading revenues and expenses; along with consideration of the stadium’s physical condition and the required cost of refurbishment to an operational standard.”

**SO could Coventry Stadium ever stage speedway and stock-car racing again?**

Not according to Brandon Estates or their consultants Turley, a company who have a particular interest in Sports and Stadia, according to their website.

They boast: “We support clubs as they consider how they can protect current value and generate

new income.

“We help develop winning planning strategies to optimise the value of property assets; to increase stadium capacity or for relocation. Our experience includes new stadia for football, rugby and cricket.

“We advise professional and amateur sports clubs in the provision of new facilities often in policy-constrained locations.

“Our work at Edgbaston Cricket Ground has helped create the UK’s second largest cricket ground and has secured its future as an important Test venue.”

They were also advisors to

continued on next page

## MUSEUM PIECE

Picture: courtesy of the John Somerville Collection. Words: John Chaplin



**THIS could be called a Summit Meeting. Three of the most iconic personalities in the history of speedway racing.**

Showmen all...dressed up and enjoying a night without the prospect of being showered in shale...or cinders. Or even suffering the wrath of the crowd.

On your left, Ove Fundin of Sweden, five times a World Champion. On your right, the man they used to call the Prince of Cinders, the evergreen match race maestro, England’s Jack Parker, who actually set Ove on the road to greatness by taking him on one of his many Australian tours.

In the centre, the man who started it all, Johnnie S. Hoskins, the ‘Old Windbag’ himself. Hoskins, the subject of Brian Burford’s feature starting on page 14 of this week’s edition, appears to be telling his two distinguished companions how he began it all way back in 1923 so you can bet he is living up to his reputation.

Lurking in the background between Ove and Johnnie is George Greenwood, pre-war star with Middlesbrough and Wembley.

The occasion? The annual dinner of the Veteran Dirt-Track Riders’ Association, now known as the World Speedway Riders’ Association – why

else would they be all toggled up in dinner suits? All three have worn the Presidential chain of office, Jack in 1972, Johnnie in 1973 and Ove in 1993.

What made Ove so special? His great friend and rival Ronnie Moore put it down to determination. He said: “He was so determined. I’ve never seen someone so blinking determined in my life. If I lost a race, I lost a race, it was nothing. But Ove was prepared to put a hammer through his own head if he lost a race.”

Parker possessed an incandescent personality, but with it came a reputation for being slaphappy when it came to his racing machinery. There was an analysis in the old Speedway Gazette, which could almost have been a eulogy.

With a meagre five points from his first qualifying round for the 1947 British Championship – then the equivalent to the World Championship – it looked as though Jack could kiss his place in the Wembley final goodbye. The Gazette said: “The very thought is sacrilege. In fact, if Jack Parker does not qualify, they might as well postpone the final till he does.

“So magnificent is the Parker legend that Jack, called upon at a moment’s notice to ride for the kingdom, is capable of grabbing any old iron that is lying around the pits and hurtling his way to triumph.”

Naturally, Jack did reach the Wembley final from his remaining qualifying rounds and, of course, naturally went on to win the title.

On Johnnie Hoskins’ peripatetic lifetime journey round the speedway tracks of the world, he once explained his philosophy thus: “When the referee’s rostrum at all tracks was in

the centre of the arena, promoters with complaints would race across the centregreen to register their protests. When referees were housed in the grandstands it was more difficult, but a good sprint from the pits to the trackside telephone was always sufficient to bring howls from the locals.

“When I got to the telephone, I’d tell the referee, ‘listen, don’t take any notice, I’m just putting a bit of life into the game’. Then, after a few moments of fist shaking and some pleading gestures to the crowd for tolerance, the telephone was thrown to the ground and I’d stamp off. The crowd got so used to the display that they expected it whenever my team competed there. To me, it was all part of the entertainment.”

Crowd-pleasers supreme, the lot of them. Where are the likes of them these days?

• **THERE are lots more fascinating speedway tales in the new book by John Chaplin and John Somerville called *Speedway At Full Throttle*, priced £19.99, published by Halsgrove and available from all good bookshops, from the secure website at [www.halsgrove.com](http://www.halsgrove.com) or by calling direct on (01823) 653777.**

■ A LIMITED edition metal badge is being produced once again for the Ben Fund Bonanza at Peterborough next month.

Organiser Steve Davies says: "Numbers will be limited to 50 gold and 50 silver.

"As always, we are offering people who cannot attend the opportunity to purchase in advance. The cost is £4 each plus £1 postage. Payment, payable to Steve Davies, 159 Woodland Road, Stanton, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs., DE15 9TJ.

"Anyone wishing to pay by bank transfer or Paypal can contact me on e-mail at walsall1888@aol.com or call 07799-835388.

"Every penny of profit goes straight into the fund. We also have a limited number of badges from previous seasons that will be available at the meeting.

"Thanks for your continued support, speedway fans, we couldn't do it without you!"

■ MARK Simmonds, an Exeter legend, will return to the city to link up with BT Sport duo Kelvin Tatum and Nigel Pearson next Monday.

Tatum and Pearson are taking their winter tour to St Thomas Social Club – close to the old County Ground – for a second successive year next Monday, February 12.

Hopes are still high of securing a piece of land for the return of the sport as fans have never given up since the closure of the old stadium in 2005.

Simmonds has fond memories of his time with the club.

"We won the league in 2000 which I think I'd have to say was the main highlight, looking back," he said.

"I remember before the season, everyone in the Speedway Star put us down to finish bottom. We were written off but we managed to have a really good year and get the title.

"That was a massive achievement for the club and to be part of that was something I'll never forget.

"The same year, Mark Loram won the World title when he was an Exeter asset, so it was a good year for the club.

"We won Knockout Cups, Premier Trophies and things like that. Any time that you won silverware was always a special moment.

"I've heard Nigel and Kelvin are both good fun and it's something a bit different, so I'm looking forward to it. I don't really know what to expect to be honest, but it should be a good night."

Tatum and Pearson move on to Paradise Wildlife Park, home of the National Speedway Museum, next Tuesday (February 13).

Rye House bosses Peter Schroeck and Steve Jenson are set to join the duo to preview the season ahead.

Admission is £10 on the door with the shows starting at 8pm.

Report: RICH JONES

continued from previous page

Liverpool Football Club on the extension to their Main Stead expansion, which has turned it into the sixth biggest capacity (just over 54,000) ground in the country.

The explosive part of Turley's report – to speedway supporters at least – is their investigation into the financial affairs of both the stadium and the speedway operations.

Their lengthy and detailed report, which is available for public scrutiny, claims: "Analysis of the most recent published abbreviated accounts for the businesses relevant to the subject premises confirms that businesses owned by the former vendor, and with registered addresses at the subject premises, owe significant sums to creditors or have liabilities significantly in excess of assets and appear in financial distress.

"Substantial inter-company loans between the related businesses of Coventry Stadium Limited, Coventry Greyhounds Club Limited and Coventry Racing Club Limited may reflect the movement of money to mask losses, liabilities and assets. Coventry Greyhounds Club Limited has since been dissolved.

"Analysis of the published abbreviated accounts for Coventry Speedway Limited confirms that liabilities have consistently exceeded assets in each year of trading with the business recording annual operating losses. The company has not turned a profit in any year of trading since incorporation in 2011."

Turley were unable to get the full accounts for the stadium, but they reveal the sorry plight of the Bees under Horton's control.

They say: "Turley has directly liaised with Mr. Michael Horton, the Company Director of Coventry Speedway Limited, to obtain management accounts in order to further understand the detailed operational trading performance of the Coventry Bees speedway team.

"This evidence confirms that operating the Coventry Bees speedway team at the subject premises has consistently represented a financially unviable business proposition. Essentially, on average, each track meeting is run at an operating loss.

"Even excluding costs and assuming the stadium landlord

would offer non-commercial terms to the Coventry Bees, the team would still generate an operating loss.

"It therefore confirms why Coventry Speedway Limited did not take up the head-lease offered by the applicant (as landlord) in January, 2017.

"Given Coventry Speedway Limited could not break even before contributing significantly towards the operating costs of Coventry Stadium, it is rational to conclude that should such costs have been added, these would have further deepened operating losses.

"Turley has not been provided with management accounts of Coventry Stadium, and hence the trading performance cannot be determined definitively.

"Some revenue and operating cost information has, however, been provided to the applicant by the former vendor to inform lease negotiations. Supplementary information has also been provided by Coventry Speedway Limited, which traded from the premises for five years.

"Operational trading performance analysis suggests that a very slim positive trading margin would be achievable in a best-case scenario where all tenants met their lease obligations and paid their rent on time and in full.

"Given the challenges faced by Coventry Speedway Limited in meeting their lease obligations, this represents an unlikely scenario.

"Moreover, should either speedway or stock-car events be withdrawn or reduced, the impact on operating margin is significant and would tip the stadium into an operating loss.

"This risk was likely evident to Coventry Racing Club Limited and Coventry Speedway Limited, with neither willing nor able to meet the stadium operational costs in part or in totality."

Records at Companies House show that on November 30, 2012, Coventry Speedway Limited's liabilities exceeded their assets by £42,969. Two years later, that figure had risen to £76,195 but on November 30, 2016 that deficit had decreased to £41,020.

And the profit and loss accounts for the seasons 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 perhaps show a more accurate and attractive picture.

In 2012 and 2013, when, one assumes, Coventry Speedway Limited was still paying for the licence, the losses are recorded as £42,970 and £29,426.

But in 2014, this turned into a trading profit of £4,730 and, in 2015, that figure improved to £42,947.

Figures available are only abbreviated accounts and do not mention any drawings that may have been made throughout the year

In their bid to get planning permission from Rugby Borough Council, Brandon Estates paint the blackest possible picture of the stadium's future.

It is, of course, in their interests to persuade the council to let them demolish the stadium and build on the site.

But Off the Beaten Track has read, digested and examined their case for ending the life of a stadium that has held some form of motorsport racing every year except 1935 and the duration of the Second World War.

And we have discovered a series of half-truths and unfounded statements in their submission to Rugby Borough Council.

While we are not experts in planning, we do know our speedway – and some (some unbiased observers might even say much) of Brandon Estates' evidence to the councillors is factually incorrect, as we will outline.

Brandon Estates have told the planners: "Based upon the information available, there is no plausible commercial basis upon which Coventry Stadium would now be reopened.

"There are no licence holders proposing to hold motor racing events at the stadium, and there is no active greyhound racing licence, which leaves Coventry Stadium without an operational purpose.

"The site is currently occupied by a disused stadium, which has previously been used for stock-car racing, speedway and greyhound racing.

"The site comprises a racing circuit with a grandstand providing visitor viewing and dining, bar and toilet facilities, ancillary buildings (storage areas, dog kennel, shop, laundry room, officers, first aid room and smaller buildings housing a score boards and food outlets); and a substantial area of car parking comprising gravel and hard standing.

"The track is surrounded by viewing platform on each side. The site is secured by barriers and a gate. The site and premises are not currently operational. It is submitted that the buildings are surplus to requirements. The Viability Assessment confirms that the challenges and general decline in the speedway, stock-car and greyhound sector has led to a substantial number of closures of stadia nationally, with financial difficulties in the face of falling attendances and revenues the primary driver cited.

"In order to share the operational costs, it is common that stock-car



**YOUNG Lions boss Neil Vatcher has hailed the second staging of the Celebration of British Speedway Awards Evening as a huge success.**

The Nuneaton Speedway Supporters' Club hosted the event on January 27 and afterwards Vatcher said: "Last year's Celebration of British Speedway was a great event but this year's was even bigger and better.

"Many different people made it such a special evening, including all the British Youth riders who attended with their mums and dads.

"Four British Champions were in attendance in Drew Kemp, Leon Flint, Sam McGurk and the British Under-21 Champion Robert Lambert, who was the special guest.

"Robert was the star of the show and spoke superbly to the audience. It is still hard to believe he is only 19."

**More pictures in SpeedwayXtra this week.**



race grounds are used for other sports, including speedway and greyhound racing."

However, our own forensic search has discovered that Coventry Racing Club Limited (CRCL) and Coventry Stadium Limited (CSL) did consistently show a trading profit, despite claims to the contrary.

CRCL's audited accounts were up to March 31 and in 2014 the profit was £6,297; in 2015, £3,431; and in 2016, £3,425.

CSL's accounting period ran until December 31 and for 2015 the trading profit was £9,318 and for 2016 the figure was even higher, £10,337.

Admittedly, they aren't substantial profits and it is difficult to tell from the limited details available and the different accounting periods exactly what state the three companies were in financially.

However, what is indisputable is the fact that, according to Companies House declarations, all three companies have regularly shown a profit rather than a loss.

That doesn't sit well with Turley's claims – based, they say, on information supplied by Mick Horton – that both the speedway operation and the stadium itself had been operating at a substantial loss in recent years.

Save Coventry Speedway will endeavour to highlight this discrepancy and I understand they will also have available the official audited accounts from Coventry Stadium Limited that will confirm an operating profit.

Save Coventry Speedway's Jeff Davies, who has been at the forefront of the campaign, told me: "Brandon Estates have got two major issues – one is the green belt issue and second the designated sporting use.

"The cornerstone of their application is around the viability of the stadium. If they can prove, or convince the 12 people on the planning committee, that the stadium is not viable, it would overcome the two issues and open the way to getting a change of use for the site and get them out of any responsibility to comply with government planning guidelines to find a replacement stadium of an equal or better standard. That's what they are trying to do."

The Turley report goes on to make a number of alleged revelations about the sale of the stadium – previously owned by Mr.

Avtar Sandhu – to Brandon Estates, including the fact that it was sold by the former owner after NatWest Bank exercised their right to force disposal to recoup monies owed.

They disclose there were six potential buyers when the stadium was first put up for sale early in 2013.

Their claim: "All offers were submitted by parties who did not intend to run the existing facility as a stadium or offer any continuation of the existing speedway, greyhound or stock-car meetings. All parties interested in the property sought to redevelop the property for alternative uses.



"In addition, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had a restriction registered against the title of the subject premises to prevent its disposal. This was removed once proof was granted that the funds for purchase were transferred directly to the solicitors of NatWest Bank. The transaction formally completed on December 2, 2015 following removal of the CPS restriction."

Brandon Estates bought the stadium for what is believed to have been around £2 million and almost immediately confirmed that both speedway and stock-car racing could continue unhindered throughout 2016.

They then offered new leases to Coventry Speedway Limited (OTBT note: Michael Derek Horton is the sole listed director) and Coventry Racing Club Limited (OTBT note: the two directors, according to the latest information at Companies House, were Avtar Singh Sandhu and Sandeep Singh Sandhu), owners of the stock car and banger racing licence but neither company agreed the lease terms.

Turley continue: "Neither tenant was willing to meet the operational

costs of Coventry Stadium in full or in equal part. As no lease was signed with tenants, Coventry Stadium closed in November, 2016.

"Coventry Racing Club Limited subsequently moved their events to Stoke Stadium in 2017, and have recently announced that the Coventry Stox operations will cease for 2018 and 2019 seasons (at least) whilst venue and financial arrangements are addressed.

"Coventry Speedway Limited had their licence to compete in speedway as the Coventry Bees racing team frozen by the governing body for the 2017 season.

that included two Newport sides, the Wasps and the Mavericks.

Of those, Oxford, Reading, Exeter, Hull, Newport, St. Austell, and the Norfolk Braves (who began the season at Skegness before decamping to King's Lynn) have all closed down but only one – Hull – was because of financial problems.

Promoters or prospective promotions at Oxford and Newport failed to reach agreement with their landlords while Reading and Exeter were shut because of redevelopment plans.

The Norfolk Braves morphed into King's Lynn Young Stars and Oxford Stadium was also subsequently sold to developers, although they have still failed to get planning permission to build houses on the Sandy Lane site

A leading member of Save Coventry Speedway said: "Brandon Estates simply haven't done their homework – it is very easy to say a track had financial problems but that isn't actually true.

"If you make a proper case study of why tracks closed down, most of them are for other reasons altogether, mainly that their stadium has been sold to someone wanting to build houses on a prime site."

Towards the end of 2016, Mr. Sandhu removed what he claimed was his property from the stadium and since then further damage has been done, much of it linked to travellers who occupied the stadium car park because of poor security.

The damage – estimates of how much it would cost to reinstate vary wildly – is another plank in the Brandon Estates' case that the stadium has no future.

Their submission continues: "The Viability Statement analyses the historic and forecasted financial trading at the subject premises.

"The applicant has instructed a firm of specialist chartered surveyors to prepare an up-to-date building condition survey and assessment of capital costs to bring Coventry Stadium back into use.

"This confirms a practical necessity for significant capital expenditure to restore the subject premises to an appropriate standard for trading following the substantial damage incurred since November, 2016.

continued on page 31

"The costs are substantial. Due to the modest (best case) stadium operating margin, any loan to meet the refurbishment costs would require an elongated repayment period that far exceeds typical commercial loan terms available for this purpose (prior to accounting for interest payments).

"In the unlikely event that full funding was secured, the interest payments required to service the debt would substantially exceed the annual operating margin as a result. Coventry Stadium would be running at an operating loss prior to making any allowance for capital repayments, depreciation, taxation and any owner's return. This is not sustainable and would lead to a swift breach of loan covenants.

"In light of this forecast, it is considered highly improbable that the applicant (as owner), or any other commercial investor, developer or operator, would consider the return on capital expended in investing in the refurbishment works to return Coventry Stadium to operation as sufficient to justify the financial risk involved.

"Moreover, there are no licence holders willing to hold motor racing events at the stadium, and there is no active greyhound racing licence, which leaves Coventry Stadium without a business case for reopening or operational purpose."

Save Coventry Speedway vehemently reject the suggestion that there is no one willing to promote motorsports.

After seeing and studying the documents submitted, there seems little doubt that the developers are making great play of the fact that permission has been given to speedway licence holder Mick Horton to run a Coventry team in the National League at Leicester.

They state: "In November, 2017 it was announced in the Coventry Telegraph that the Coventry Bees had reached an agreement with the Leicester Lion [sic] speedway team to share facilities at the Leicester Speedway from 2018.

"As such, the Coventry Bees are looking to turn their focus to the Leicester Speedway Stadium, a stadium located approximately 27 miles away of the site which is better suited to its use as a speedway stadium for a number of reasons including its accessibility and the character of surrounding uses.

"In light of its surroundings, its more active use and adjacent uses, Leicester Speedway Stadium is relatively better located for its purpose."

They also rule out the possibility of either greyhound racing or stock-cars returning to even a refurbished venue, insisting: "There was a history of closures and reopening of greyhound racing until Coventry Dogs Limited, which held a lease granting rights to hold racing events at the stadium, had its license revoked in February, 2014 due to incurring significant financial losses over consecutive years. The company was

## THE bereaved parents of a speedway-mad teenager have launched a bid to create an academy in his honour.

Junior rider Greg Mackie, 18, was found dead at his Edinburgh College halls in November, just weeks after starting a course in TV and media.

The youngster grew up with speedway, supporting Glasgow Tigers since attending his first meeting at just six days old, and eventually took up the sport – racing in the Northern Junior League for Castleford and becoming a regular face on the second-half circuit.

He had taken a year out to begin his studies but planned to get back on a bike this season to continue his hobby and attempt to follow in the footsteps of boyhood heroes James Grieves and Mick Powell.

Following the tragedy, parents Colin and Mandy Mackie resolved to carry on his name – and have begun fund-raising for the facility they want to create for young riders north of the border.

It comes after the Tigers announced they would carry the logo for the Greg Mackie Speedway Academy on their team race-suits this season.

Colin told Speedway Star: "My view is that the sport is so expensive to get into, and at the moment there are very few facilities in the west of Scotland for people without their own equipment. There are even very few for those with equipment.

"I want to create an academy where, instead of the youngsters just coming and doing what Greg was doing – racing round the track themselves and picking up basic knowledge from people like myself – we bring in former or current riders to give them a bit of coaching, and give them a bit about the bikes, and how to assess the track conditions.

"I also want to have bikes available – a try before you buy scenario. For Greg to ride, we had to buy his equipment and let him do it, and he could've easily walked away four weeks down the line and said, 'this isn't for me'.

"I want to bring this in so that people who watch their heroes going round the track every week can come and have a shot at it – so that the parents don't have the initial big outlay to get involved.

"But there are also people who just want a shot of the sport and be able to say, 'I've given this a go' – that's the other avenue to go down.

"If we can get involved with some of these kids that are zooming round the streets, get them off the road and into this environment where they're learning, that could benefit the sport as well as the kids.

subsequently dissolved in December, 2015.

"The applicant has received several enquiries from parties interested in either acquiring or operating Coventry Stadium since its original purchase.

"The applicant has willingly engaged with these parties. Based on correspondence provided by the applicant, to date none of the parties seeking to re-use the facilities have 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."

This is another contentious question with Save Coventry Speedway disputing Brandon Estates' willingness to enter into



• Colin Mackie with his late son Greg. Picture: WALTER SHIRRA

"And while we're doing that, we'd like to teach them about drug and alcohol stuff, and point them the right way – in conjunction with the police, who I want to be involved too."

Colin says a piece of land or track would need to be secured to host the venture – and that he's looking to raise "as much money as possible" to fund the project.

The initiative has got off to a good start, with more than £2,500 collected at a social event last month with appearances from Lewis Kerr, Neil Vatcher, Mitchell Davey and Neil Macfarlane, and plans for a music night at the Peugeot Ashfield Stadium in March –

starring the likes of David Facenna, son of Tigers co-owner Gerry, and band Entry Room, featuring Glasgow fan Jack-Alexander Bestow.

Colin says he plans on putting Greg's bike to use at the academy – but has vowed not to use his late son's race-suits, including the one he'd already had made for the new season.

He believes his son would have been overwhelmed by the support the academy plans have had – but says he's simply following Greg's trait of wanting to help people.

"He was never going to be a superstar but his passion was so much for the sport that he intended on making a documentary on the sport, because he felt it wasn't getting enough publicity," said Colin.

"I think he'd be delighted with this because he always felt it was something the sport needed. He would probably be a bit gobsmacked with the response there has been – which has been fantastic from all over – there were more than 450 people at his funeral.

"He'd maybe be slightly amused in his own way, because he had a good sense of humour and tried to treat everything as fun. That is going to be part of the academy as well – we want to put a bit of fun into it – it won't just be a classroom and all deadly serious.

"If Greg was doing the second-half at Glasgow or wasn't riding, he would help people and do fuel and oil – he was so considerate.

"Greg always told me he was going to be famous. I don't think he quite planned it in this way, and that's the sad thing about it, but we will try to keep his memory going."

People can donate to the cause by visiting [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/colin-mackie](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/colin-mackie).

Gig for Greg will be held at the Tigers Den diner on Saturday, March 10 from 7 pm. Tickets, priced £7.50, are on sale now – further details are available from those taking part or Colin directly.

Words: BRYAN COPLAND