

Our Ref: LS/mb/PF/9189
(Please reply to Banbury office)

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Mrs Erica Buchanan
Planning Department
Rugby Borough Council
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3 October 2018

Dear Erica

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
LAND AT COVENTRY STADIUM, BRANDON
APPLICATION REF. R18/0186**

On behalf of Brandon Estates Ltd, please find below a response to your query regarding the EIP Inspector's comment in his letter dated 16 May 2018 relating to alternative provision, in particular in relation to stock car racing.

In our telephone conversation you stated that we had satisfactorily demonstrated that there was alternative provision for the previous speedway use on the site but that you required details regarding possible alternative provision for the previous stockcar use on the site.

1.0 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION FOR STOCK CAR RACING

1.1 With regards to the alternative provision for stock car racing, it is considered it would be helpful to set out some background relating to stock car racing.

UK Stock Cars

1.2 There are two principal competitions within UK professional stock car racing: the World Championship and the National Points Championship; and both are recognised by the British Stock Car Association (BriSCA). The premier competition is the World Championship which is held in September every year at one of the UK host tracks. The final racing grid is determined by a series of UK qualifying rounds and two semi-finals. The UK finalists are joined by qualifying stock car drivers from the Netherlands and invited drivers from similar international motorsports. The winner of the championship is crowned with a gold roof to race with the following season.

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- 1.3 The main season-long competition within UK professional stock car racing is known as the National Points Championship. Points are recorded for registered BriSCA F1 Drivers across every race within every meeting. A driver's monthly score determines their grade and therefore their starting position within the grid. Drivers are therefore promoted and demoted through the grades within a season.
- 1.4 At the end of the season the 12 highest scoring drivers progress to the National Points Championship (Phase 2) which consist of a Championship race termed 'a Shootout.' The winner of the Shootout wins a silver roof for the next year of racing.

Governance & Promotion

- 1.5 In the UK, the sport is managed by British Stock Car Association (BriSCA) which consists of a board of 6 permanent promoters, one of which acts as Chairman. BriSCA collaborates with the British Stock Car Drivers Association (BSDCA) to form the BriSCA Management Board (BMB) which acts as the governing body for the sport.
- 1.6 All venues that stage BriSCA F1 Racing have to be licensed by and meet the requirements of BriSCA. All drivers wishing to race at a BriSCA Formula One licensed meeting have to be registered in advance by the BSDCA, acting as agents for BriSCA, in order to comply with insurance arrangements. BriSCA provides annual updates to regulations relating to car and track specifications, race procedures and all other aspects of the sport.

Stock Car Racing

- 1.7 Stock Car racing was brought to the UK in 1954, with the first race being held at New Cross Stadium in London and with a first meeting being held at Coventry Stadium that same year. The form of racing quickly gained popularity.
- 1.8 BriSCA F1 racing began at Coventry Stadium in 1958 and ran the first Saturday of every month April-November until 2016. In 1960 the BriSCA F1 World Championship was first held at the stadium; and since then it has hosted a number of championship events as follows:
 - World Championship - 1960, 1964, 1968, 1971, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2014
 - British Championship - 1961, 1965, 1969, 1992, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2012
 - Grand National Championship - 1973, 1998, 2006, 2011
 - Trust Fund - 1981, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011
 - World of Shale Championship - 2011, 2012, 2013
- 1.9 The promotion of BriSCA F1 racing was historically undertaken by the Ochiltree family until the sale of the stadium and promotional rights Coventry Stadium Limited in 2003.
- 1.10 Stock car racing was promoted by Mr Avtar Sandhu, director of Coventry Stadium Limited under the name Coventry Stox, via way of a lease granted to Coventry Racing Club Limited, until the end of the 2016 racing season (as facilitated by the 2016 lease).

Events following Acquisition in 2015 at Coventry Stadium

- 1.11 Ultimately the stadium ceased operations in November 2016 and has remained closed since.

1.12 Prior to the acquisition it is understood that the applicant had reached agreement with the former vendor to extinguish the existing lease to Coventry Racing Club Limited, which otherwise ran to February 2023. The lease between Coventry Racing Club Limited and Coventry Dogs Limited was also extinguished – the latter business having been dissolved.

Coventry Racing Club Limited

1.13 The applicant, as landlord, agreed a new lease with Coventry Racing Club Limited which ran from 8 September 2015 to 31 December 2016. This was set at a reduced rent of £10,000 per annum (compared to £30,000 per annum within the previous extinguished lease) and payable on a monthly basis.

1.14 This lease enabled Coventry Racing Club Limited, as tenant, to continue to utilise the subject site and premises for the purpose of stock car/bangers track events over the 2016 season uninterrupted by the acquisition of the subject premises by the applicant.

1.15 In mid-2016 negotiations between the applicant and Coventry Racing Club Limited ensued with respect to agreeing a new lease for 2017 onwards.

1.16 However, due to the financial difficulties faced by Coventry Stadium Limited (and Coventry Racing Club Limited), which had ultimately led to the sale of the subject site, the applicant was legally advised not to grant a further lease to Coventry Racing Club Limited. There was considered a high risk that the terms of any subsequent lease would be breached.

1.17 Instead, Coventry Racing Club Limited confirmed the intention to move stock car racing to alternative venues from 2017 onwards. As Coventry Racing Club Limited is the licence holder for stock car racing across a 30-mile radius from Coventry Stadium, this would prevent licenced stock car racing from being held at Coventry Stadium.

1.18 During 2017 the Coventry Stox held their events at Stoke stadium and shared the facilities. However, their Programme from Saturday 4th November 2017, which is written by the club's management (and former operators of Coventry Stadium) confirms that the Coventry Stox will freeze their promotion for the next 1 to 2 seasons – placing doubt on the ability of the club to trade on a financially viable basis – even when sharing facilities.

1.19 Specifically, on page 20, the management confirm that the Coventry Stox have struggled to trade viably in 2017:

"...it's unlikely that the Coventry Stox team will be touring the 'first Saturday of the month' dates in 2018. The dates used this year haven't been very well supported by fans and drivers alike – why I don't really know but that's how things are. It has been quite difficult to turn a decent profit and unfortunately running next year can't be justified. I can totally understand this but it doesn't make it any easier."

1.20 Furthermore, on page 20 the Programme refers to whether the management consider there is a future in operating stock car or speedway events at Coventry Stadium. It concludes:

"There is some really good people working very hard to get the place back and running but realistically this isn't going to happen – it simply isn't viable."

1.21 A copy of the quoted programme is attached.

ALTERNATIVE VENUES FOR STOCK CAR RACING

- 1.22 Based on review of the BriSCA fixture list there were approximately 10 UK stadiums that held BriSCA F1 racing in 2017. Each stadium holds a varying number of meetings and fixtures throughout the season. There is no principal national stadium for the sport. The major championship events are held at varying stadiums determined through a bidding process undertaken by each stadium's Stock Car promoter. It is therefore possible for a stadium to have more than one stock car promoter.
- 1.23 Also of note, 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 use of these stadiums could help sustain the sport and provide additional revenue for other stadiums.
- 1.24 We have therefore undertaken a review of stadiums within 70 miles of the site which could accommodate stock car racing. 70 miles has been chosen as this is the distance that the stockcar fans were travelling to at Stoke Stadium. This is as set out below:

Stoke Stadium, Loomer Road, Chesterton, ST5 74B

- **Approximate Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 70 miles
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** Does currently host BriSCA F1 and therefore is suitable
- **Other Comments:** During 2017 the Coventry Stox held their events at Stoke stadium and shared the facilities but as stated above their Programme from Saturday 4th November 2017, which is written by the club's management (and former operators of Coventry Stadium) confirms that the Coventry Stox will freeze their promotion for the next 1 to 2 seasons.

Perry Barr Stadium, Aldridge Road, Birmingham B42 2ET

- **Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 28 miles
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** The stadium is not currently listed in the Brisca F1 list of venues but is running similar types of uses.
- **Other Comments:** The New Perry Bar Stadium has an extensive history since it was opened in 1929 and originally built for Birchfield Harriers (athletics club) who left in 1977. It is now used by the GRA for greyhound racing and is also home to the Birmingham Brummies Speedway team.

Beamont Park, Leicester, LE4 1DZ

- **Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 27 miles
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** The stadium is not currently listed in the Brisca F1 list of venues but is running similar types of uses.
- **Other Comments:** The stadium is used by the Leicester Lions speedway team. In November 2017 it was announced in the Coventry Telegraph that the Coventry Bees had reached an agreement with the Leicester Lion speedway team to share facilities at the Leicester Speedway from 2018. As such the Coventry Bees have been racing at 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. It could be that the stadium could be used for stock car racing as well.

Birmingham Wheels Raceway, Adderley Road South, B8 1AD

- **Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 26
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** Does currently host BriSCA F1 and therefore is suitable
- **Other Comments:** Adjacent to other sporting facilities including a go kart track. The track is a 330 metres tarmac service. Other facilities on site include: pit access; terraces, permanent food outlets and permanent toilet blocks.

Northampton, Northampton International Raceway, Barfield on the Green, NN7 2BA

- **Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 40 miles
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** Does currently host BriSCA F1 and therefore is suitable
- **Other Comments:** Northampton International Raceway hosts Stock Car, Hot Rod and Banger Racing on some Saturday evenings, Sunday afternoons and Bank Holiday Mondays. The tarmac track is 396 metres. Other facilities on site include: pit access; terraces, permanent food outlets, licensed bars, and permanent toilet blocks.

Hednesford Hills Raceway, Hednesford, Cannock

- **Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 42 miles
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** Does currently host BriSCA F1 and therefore is suitable
- **Other Comments:** The circuit is a major venue for a number of National Hot Rods, BriSCA Formula 1 Stock Cars, BriSCA F2 and Banger racing. The tarmac surface is 420 metres. Other facilities on site include: Pit Access; terraces, permanent food outlets, licensed bars, and permanent toilet blocks.

Trent Raceway, Burton-on-Trent

- **Distance from Coventry Stadium site:** 45 miles
- **Is it suitable for stock car racing:** Is used for stock car racing but does not appear to be for BriSCA F1
- **Other Comments:** Trent Raceway is a dirt track that caters for all of your motorsport preferences, ranging from non-contact super classes such as super saloons and superstox classes, stock cars, front and rear wheel drive classes, to the Rookiebangers and Full Contact Banger classes. The track also caters for a novice class. Facilities include full toilet and catering facilities with covered seating areas.

1.25 It is considered therefore that there is possibility of alternative provision at several sites within 70 miles of the site.

2.0 CONCLUSION

2.1 As set out above there clearly are alternative locations and possible alternative sites where stockcar racing could be held. As noted in our planning application submission the stock car operators have either lost their license or as set out in the evidence as part of the planning application submission have not been able to operate viably.

2.2 The Framework promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development to ensure positive economic growth and promoting rather than stifling development. The proposed development represents sustainable housing development.

- 2.3 The site will be able to deliver much needed housing in an accessible location to facilities in Binley Woods and Brandon, including affordable provision (in an area of housing need) for the Borough in the near future in the context of the challenging housing target.
- 2.4 The provision of new market housing, and the provision of new affordable housing – for those people who have a housing need is a material consideration. These are real people whose voices are rarely heard within the planning process, whose lives are affected daily by the inadequacy of housing accommodation to meet their domestic needs.
- 2.5 The proposals on the site will make use of previously developed land. It will complement the existing residential community and provide new public open space and will improve the quality of the surrounding environment.
- 2.6 The site is located within a sustainable location, close to a range of services and facilities in Binley Woods with good connections to public transport modes.

Speedway

Notably regarding speedway, you recently noted that it had been reported to you that the Coventry Bees Speedway team was having performance success at Leicester and you queried whether Leicester could accommodate the Bees if they went up a League. It is noted that the Leicester team (Leicester Lions) is in a higher league than the Bees, this suggests Leicester facilities can accommodate the Bees if they are promoted.

I trust this if of help, if you have any queries, please contact Louise Steele at Framptons.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L Steele".

Louise Steele