

19 January 2001

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Dear Helen

Re: Milton Keynes Stadium

Further to our ongoing discussions, it is now necessary to move matters forward with Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships in order to provide a relocating club with the legal certainty it requires before any firm commitment to move will be possible. This structure is necessary to prevent the 'cart and horse' problems of relocation, providing certainty on the one hand for the Council and English Partnerships that a football club is part of the conditions and for the football club on the other that planning permission will be obtained.

I am pleased to detail below a summary of recent progress, particularly with regard to the national press speculation linking Wimbledon FC's search for a permanent home with the Milton Keynes stadium development.

Speculation regarding the potential relocation of Wimbledon Football Club has recently reached fever pitch, with stories appearing in the national news media including lead back cover features in the Evening Standard and the Guardian, together with London BBC TV, Radio 5 and all the local media. Milton Keynes even had its first ever mention on Match of the Day. In response to the Wimbledon relocation issue, the Football League have recently gone on the record to say that the Board would consider an application by a Football League club for a relocation to Milton Keynes. A spokesperson went further to describe Wimbledon as a "wandering club" in need of a home after ten years outside of their borough at Selhurst Park.

As members know, as football fans we have been very clear all along that Milton Keynes can only be a solution for a football league club that is experiencing serious difficulties with their home ground facilities. It is not our intention to poach anyone's football team and I believe the role we played behind the scenes during the latter days of Crystal Palace FC's time in administration has helped to allay any concerns the football authorities may have had as to our intentions. For your information, in this case we helped both the Football League and the Administrator, Simon Patterson, to conclude a local deal for the club, by providing an option of last resort.

The Wimbledon story has, however, leaked prematurely, with a number of important issues not yet fully addressed, including the club's full consultation with supporter groups, Merton Council and other local stakeholders. An early confirmation of relocation will certainly add to the momentum of the planning process and Charles Koppel, the club's Deputy Chairman, has publicly stated that wants to see an early resolve in order to avoid continuing speculation. There is still the possibility, however, that the club's stakeholders will convince them to take longer to consider their options and the club may wish to be seen to be fully re-evaluating all the local opportunities. In this event, it may be necessary to delay formal announcement until the planning process is further advanced and a realistic occupation date can be agreed.

Wimbledon are very much our preferred option, with the strong synergy between a homeless club with a Premiership history and Milton Keynes' ambitions for a national standard stadium. We do, however, maintain contact with a number of Football League clubs as previously detailed to you. There is no doubt that Milton Keynes will provide a sustainable future for a club, whilst also enabling the enfranchisement of our 250,000 population with the cultural and community benefits professional football will bring. It is anticipated that the stadium provision will also encourage and accelerate the development of other team sports in Milton Keynes.

I have previously detailed to members the reasoning behind the desire to bring top-flight football to Milton Keynes and the considerable cultural and community benefits that will result. The stadium proposals benefit from strong cross-party support from many members of Milton Keynes Council and both local MPs, Dr Phyllis Starkey and Brian White, as well as great interest from local business and the media. I understand from Dr Starkey that 'the solidarity of Milton Keynes' has been noted at national government level.

The stadium development is evolving as a key element in regeneration plans for Bletchley in the south of the city through the planned introduction of the sport, creative industry and retail employment opportunities. Working in tandem with other planned initiatives at Bletchley Park and the potential future development of Bletchley Station, the fully integrated approach we are adopting will generate significant planning gains for Bletchley, which we hope to target at inclusive community projects and improved public transport connectivity.

Our work on the stadium has already involved a high level of consultation with Milton Keynes businesses, neighbourhood councils and community groups, schools, youth football clubs, etc, as well as receiving operational advice and support from the outset from the police, fire and environmental health authorities. The local media are already providing public consultation platforms including radio phone-in discussions, regular features and updates and publishing a broad spectrum of comment.

The local community will be right at the heart of any professional team in Milton Keynes. As you are aware, in partnership with the Council and the School Sports Federation we have introduced the Milton Keynes Talent Identification Programme (MK TIP), which is currently producing a database of the 35,000 school-age children and their access to and attainments in youth football. This project is being warmly welcomed by the schools and is available for all pupils, boys and girls. It has led to the establishment of a football communication network between schools, youth football clubs, Milton Keynes Council

and ourselves and from which the incoming club will benefit. It has already confirmed that there are, as I have previously detailed, Milton Keynes boys signed to 9 different Football League clubs, with most travelling 50 miles for professional coaching benefits, but there are still lots of Milton Keynes boys excluded from this opportunity for excellence. For members' information, at Under 14 level, Milton Keynes team Bow Brickhill were the first MK team to be televised by Sky, when they won the Sky/News of the World National 6-a-side Competition last summer.

In Bletchley, we have been involved in an Asian Youth Film SRB project in partnership with Thames Valley Police, which is premiering later this month at Cineworld in the new Xscape complex.

Progress on the scheme is governed by Milton Keynes Council's Emerging Local Plan process, as it is necessary for the stadium planning permission to share a co-ordinated approach. Discussions between our stadium planning consultants and the relevant council planning personnel are ongoing and work undertaken for the Transport Impact Assessment, Retail Impact Assessment, Bletchley Regeneration and Economic Development Report and full Environmental Study. A detailed planning application will be submitted following the publication of the Local Plan pre-inquiry report.

As you can see, we are committed to our task of bringing professional league football to Milton Keynes and the development of a landmark sports stadium within our borough. By working in partnership with the Council and English Partnerships, the reality of achievement draws ever nearer for us all. If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best personal regards.

Yours sincerely

PETE WINKELMAN