

7. LAND TO THE EAST OF M1 JUNCTION 12 – COMMUNITY STADIUM FOR LUTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB AND WAREHOUSE/DISTRIBUTION DEVELOPMENT

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the scope and current status of the recently submitted planning applications and Environmental Assessment for a community football stadium with warehouse/distribution units at Harlington Road, Toddington.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the information and to update Members of the Committee with further reports to follow as appropriate.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 An Environmental Statement has been submitted in support of an outline planning application (reference SB/TP/08/0230) 'for the erection of a community stadium of 20,000 seat capacity, with the potential to be expanded to 25,000 seats for Luton Town FC. Outdoor sports pitches (8,907 sqm in total). Community facilities within stadium including an eight-court sports hall, a public access gym, flexible community space (exercise studios) and meeting rooms. Ancillary facilities within the community stadium including club shop and cafe/bar uses. Erection of five warehouse/distribution units (Class B8) (179,123 Sqm of storage and distribution units with ancillary office accommodation). Access enhancements including construction of new pedestrian link to Harlington Railway Station and associate bus link infrastructure; internal road infrastructure, parking and servicing areas including provision for coach parking and alighting; and new landscaping.'
- 3.2 A separate request for a Screening Opinion had been submitted 15th June 2007. The Council responded by letter dated 6th July 2007 confirming its view that the development constitutes EIA development and that an Environmental Impact Assessment was required.
- 3.3 A Scoping Opinion was sought by the applicants under cover of letter dated 12th July 2007. The Council responded to this by letter dated 27th September 2007 and made a number of comments with regard to the scope of the statement.
- 3.4 The planning application was registered on 27th February 2008 and is in outline form with access to be determined. Layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are reserved for future consideration. In accordance with Circular 01/2006 the amount of development is specified, confirmed as being 29,722sqm for community stadium (excluding the new outdoor pitches) and 179,123 sqm for storage and distribution use.

- 3.5 A separate full application (reference 08/00325/FULL) involving Land at Harlington Railway Station and Land to the West of Harlington Railway Station for an 'access to serve Community Stadium, storage and distribution uses; including pedestrian link, shuttlebus loop, bus shelter and landscaping' has been submitted to Mid Bedfordshire District Council.
- 3.6 The statutory 21 day consultation period for the main outline application ends on 31st March 2008 but as this is a major application with an Environmental Impact Assessment, comments have been welcomed until 21st April 2008.
- 3.7 All of the documents have been placed on the Councils website with easy option links to view the layout plan and summary.

4.0 **INITIAL OUTLINE OF ISSUES RAISED IN APPLICANTS PLANNING STATEMENT**

- 4.1 The applicants have submitted the following documents;
 - Planning application forms and plans
 - Planning Statement
 - Environmental Statement Non Technical Summary
 - Environmental Statement Main Text
 - Environmental Statement Technical Appendices
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Transport Assessment
 - Transport Assessment Figures and Appendices
 - Statement of Community Involvement
 - Sustainability Statement
 - PPS6 Statement
- 4.2 The warehouse development, comprising 5 units, is put forward as enabling development, allowing for £25 million funding which, together with grants and other sources would make the stadium affordable to Luton Town Football Club. The statement considers that the M1 Junction 12 site is the only available, viable and sustainable site to accommodate a relocated stadium within the required timescales. The applicants consider that the site is better than alternative sites, being large enough to accommodate the package of enabling development. Further, although on the edge of Luton, the conurbation will extend within 2.5km of the site by 2021. The statement adds that the site would allow for better safety management of crowds and would allow for a public transport connection from Harlington Station with a pedestrian link to the stadium.
- 4.3 The applicant advises that the proposals are seen as fundamentally linked with the future of the Bury Park area and would enable the Kenilworth Road site to be redeveloped in accordance with Luton Councils aspirations.
- 4.4 The M1 widening scheme, junction 10-13 includes a new junction 12 layout along with a dual 4 lane motorway.

- 4.5 The Thameslink 2000 project involves the upgrading of Harlington Station to accommodate 12 carriage trains. The applicants propose a shuttle bus service from the station to the stadium. Alternative travel choice is considered under the Travel Assessment.
- 4.6 The applicants advise that the Community Stadium would be available for use by numerous sporting, leisure, community organisations, local schools and the education establishment.
- 4.7 The proposed Stadium would be used for professional matches, reserve matches, other matches, music concerts and other sports events.
- 4.8 The warehousing would be 24 hour use, 7 days per week.
- 4.9 The applicants advise that they have considered the following alternative sites;
- Kenilworth Road
 - M1 Junction 11a
 - M1 Junction 10
 - Land to the north of Luton, Houghton Regis and Dunstable
 - Napier Park, Luton
 - Vauxhall Test Track, Chaul End
 - Land to the East of Leighton Buzzard
 - MK Dons Stadium, Milton Keynes

All are considered by the applicant to have restrictive constraints.

- 4.10 The applicants Planning Statement includes a section addressing the need to justify very special circumstances, the site being within the Green Belt. This is followed by a section, which considers the appropriateness of the supporting development (Warehouse/distribution) and conclusions. These are reproduced at Appendix A to this report.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Consultation is under way and a number of comments have already been received including a letter from the Director of LTFC 2020 Ltd, the company that has exchanged contracts to purchase Luton Town Football Club out of administration. This is included at Appendix B to this report.
- 5.2 The submissions are complex and the views of many consultees, including the Highways Agency, are awaited. It is intended to update Members of the Planning Committee of the significant responses, prior to the report of the application for formal determination.
- 5.3 The illustrative layout and typical elevations are attached at Appendix C to this report.

6.0 Environmental Implications

- 6.1 This report is an information report. Therefore, in terms of South Bedfordshire District Councils Corporate Environmental Policy, the recommendations are exempt from environmental assessment.

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Background Papers (open to public inspection): None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Extract from J12 Planning Statement (pages 61-85 inclusive) from Goodman International.

Appendix B – Letter from Stephen Browne, Director LTFC2020 Ltd (dated 5 March 2008).

Appendix C – Illustrative layout and typical elevations of proposed development from Goodman International.