

FAO: John Chaplin
Planning Team
Stroud District Council
Council Offices
Ebley Mill
Stroud
GL5 4UB

2nd July 2019

Our Ref: 6470_P0321_03

Dear Mr Chaplin,

ECO PARK RESUBMISSION

Introduction and Scope

This resubmission follows a decision by Stroud District Council's Development Control Committee to refuse planning permission for Eco Park (ref: S.16/0043/OUT) on 12 June 2019. The application before the Committee was for a football stadium and associated infrastructure only with Officer's recommendation for approval. The Green Technology Hub, originally part of the planning application made in January 2016, was removed via an amendment to the planning application in December 2017 – this was raised at Committee as the red line boundary still covered land south of the A419. Whilst for consistency this remains the case in our revised submission, the Applicant proposes a planning condition to ensure that the land to the south of the A419 is not used for the stadium or it's associated infrastructure and will, for the purposes of this application, remain as open countryside.

The description of development and layout for this Outline application is identical to application S.16/0043/OUT save that one of the grass pitches is now an *all-weather pitch*. This change was made in order to enable use of the pitch by other local football clubs, thereby directly addressing the lack of sports provision within the District. Consequently this application is for:

Outline planning application in respect of land at M5 junction 13 west of Stonehouse, Eastington, Gloucestershire. Development comprises a 5,000-capacity football stadium and other ancillary uses (Use Class D2); one full-sized grass pitch and one full-sized all-weather pitch and a goal practice area (Use Class D2); car parking for cars and coaches and highways improvements to the A419 including a signalised site junction and combined cycle/footway. All matters reserved save for access.

With all matters reserved save for access, outline planning permission is again being sought for a signalised site access off the A419, with full dualling of the A419 from Junction 13 of the M5 to Chipmans Platt roundabout. As a result, peak time journey times along this stretch will reduce. The signalised site access includes a pedestrian and cycle crossing of the A419, with a combined footway/cycleway on the south side of the A419 which will link to National Cycle Route 45 at Grove Lane.

As per the previous application, this application seeks approval for a 5,000-capacity stadium for Forest Green Rovers Football Club (FGRFC) designed by world-renowned architects, Zaha Hadid (ZHA). Ancillary uses contained within the stadium may include a club shop, food and beverage facilities, a health and fitness suite, training and conference rooms together with office space. Elsewhere on site, the proposal includes two full size practice pitches, a goal practice area, parking for around 1,740 cars, together with internal access roads and parking for coaches and bicycles. The existing farm buildings are to be retained and refurbished for grounds maintenance equipment. The entire scheme sits within a parkland setting with some 500 new trees and 1.8km of new hedgerows. The hedgerows affected by the development will be translocated within the site.

Following the previous refusal, the Applicant is proposing that the following matters are encompassed within a Section 106 planning obligation pertaining to the development:

1. Match Day Public Transport Strategy (subsidised match day buses from Nailsworth, Stroud and Stonehouse and, subject to a successful trial to establish sufficient demand, Cam & Dursley train station);
2. Employment and Training Policy (to encourage and promote local opportunities);
3. Ceasing occupation of the existing New Lawn stadium;
4. Stadium design (to ensure the stadium is substantially the same as the submitted illustrations and does not become a more traditional metal clad structure such as the Sixways Worcester Warriors stadium off Junction 6 of the M5).

It is expected that a Heads of Terms for the S.106 will be agreed before the application goes before the Councils Development Control Committee. For clarity, car parking and bus ticket pricing will be set to ensure it is cheaper for two people to get the bus than share a car and park at the stadium and a condition is offered to secure a Community Use Agreement.

Why FGRFC needs a new home

The current home of FGRFC is The New Lawn, Forest Green, Nailsworth. The ability of the Club to operate sustainably is hindered by the location, which is not particularly accessible. The closest train station is 5 miles away in Stroud and the nearest motorway is some 8 miles away. The lack of parking onsite results in local congestion in nearby housing estates, and traffic numbers increase 150% in some cases. Promotion to League Two in 2017 increased average fan numbers from some 1,800 to over 2,600. Furthermore, the Club struggles with both power and water availability with little spare capacity in the networks. The result is that development onsite (e.g. additional catering facilities) is not possible as there is insufficient space to construct new resources e.g. more renewable generation or water tanks. Future expansion of the stadium, as is the ambition to progress to the Championship would also not be possible. The site also adjoins the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a national designation, meaning the ground, nor the car parking can be expanded, without drawing a statutory objection on landscape grounds. Full details of why the Club needs a new home are set out in the enclosed letter from the Chair of Forest Green Rovers Football Club.

Alternative sites and a 'do nothing' approach has been considered in Chapter 4 of the enclosed Environmental Statement and Supplemental Planning Statement. The 'do nothing' approach would hinder development of FGRFC and continue to highlight the difficulties of running the club at its current location, as discussed above. Furthermore, this would be a lost opportunity for the area, including economically in the form of construction and operational jobs; improved access into the area with the A419 upgrades, a landmark building providing a gateway feature to Stroud District from the M5, biodiversity enhancements and improved sports provision for the District.

Alternative sites assessed included Junction 12 near Javelin Park. As highlighted by the Highways representative at the Committee meeting for application S.16/0043/OUT this junction at capacity and is not capable of a viable upgrade to make it an efficient motorway junction. Using power from the energy-from-waste plant to supply the site is not in keeping with Ecotricity's ethos over waste (whereby it should be reduced at source); and in any event the site would be powered by Ecotricity, using 100% renewable sources such as wind and solar.

Other sites included Aston Down Industrial Estate – however this is within the AONB and as such would likely warrant significant statutory objection, and Oldends Lane Industrial Estate – however with employment opportunities allocated here, the remaining land available here was considered insufficient to accommodate Eco Park and the associated ancillary infrastructure.

FGRFC Community Outreach Programmes

FGRFC currently undertakes a wide range of programmes designed to promote sport and sustainability to the wider community, including:

- **'Fit2Last with FGR'** - An interactive educational programme for schools and the local community. The programme teaches the benefits of sport and recreation, health and wellbeing and sustainability.

- **Ambassadors Scheme** - This involves around 50 schools and some 80 ambassadors each year. The ambassadors get to see how sustainability works in practice at the stadium and write reports for their fellow students on their experiences. Every year FGR gives out 400 replica shirts and free match day tickets to children in Year 3.
- **FGR Community Trust** - During school holidays the Club runs soccer camps for children aged 4-14 to develop their footballing skills. The Academy also trains around 140 children, including 19 'Scholars', with the aim of developing local players for the First Team. The Scholars also deliver four football training sessions via the Skills School free of charge to 5-7 year olds.
- **Other activities** - Player visits to school, hospitals and good causes; Local groups offered complementary tickets to attend a league game in the Community Stand – to date this has included charities, youth teams, schools and youth groups; Eco tours are also offered to groups wanting to learn more about the club, environmental projects and information on sustainability and on the last day of the 2018/19 season a family fun day was run onsite, including a range of activities and a free Skills School for children.

The new home ground will enable these programmes to grow and flourish.

Application Documents

This resubmission includes the following documentation, which remains unchanged from the December 2017 stadium only application (S.16/0043/OUT), and further environmental Information (FEI) numbered 4 – 8, except where indicated:

| Resubmission of the documents submitted in December 2017 as the Stadium Only Application | |
|--|---------------|
| Environmental Statement, including: Non-technical Summary; Volume 1 Main Text; Volume 2 Figures; Volume 3 Appendices printed copy comprising Parts 1 - 3: Part 2 includes a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy; and Arboricultural Survey; Part 3 includes the Transport Assessment and Outline Travel Plan. | December 2017 |
| Design and Access Statement | December 2017 |
| Planning Statement | December 2017 |
| Planning Drawings, including: Existing Site Plan 6470_T0501_01; Concept Plan 2515_ST_001 Figure 1.1; Existing and Proposed Levels Plan 2515_ST_003; Signalised Access and A419 Dualling E191/1 Rev B; Location Plan 6470_T0502_01 | December 2017 |
| Preliminary Risk Assessment (including Envirocheck Report) | October 2015 |
| Statement of Community Involvement | November 2015 |
| Utilities Statement | December 2017 |
| Resubmission of the documents submitted in May 2018 as FEI 4 | |
| Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment | May 2018 |
| Supplemental Planning Statement | April 2018 |
| Noise Report providing a response to WYG's review (dated March 2018) | No date |
| M5 Junction 13 Proposed Road Markings (E191/6 Rev B) | January 2018 |
| Transport – response to Eastington Parish Council | May 2018 |
| Outline Travel Plan | May 2018 |
| Resubmission of the documents submitted in May 2018 as FEI 5 | |
| Sensitivity testing of baseline traffic | May 2018 |
| Revised Downton Road junction assessment | May 2018 |
| Revised Site Access junction assessment | May 2018 |
| Response to the Council's Senior Biodiversity Officer | May 2018 |

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| Resubmission of the documents submitted in August 2018 as FEI 6 | |
| Noise Report in response to WYG's review of FEI 4 (dated July 2018) | No date |
| Response to Standish Parish Council – Highways representation | July 2018 |
| Response to Frampton Parish Council – Highways representation | July 2018 |
| Ecological Report providing a Biodiversity Impact Assessment and Outline Method Statement for translocation of hedgerows and trees | No date |
| Resubmission of the documents submitted in October 2018 as FEI 7 | |
| Noise Report in response to WYG's review (dated August 2018) | No date |
| Pressure for Change – why a new home ground is needed for FGRFC | No date |
| Potential for informal public park and ride | September 2018 |
| Resubmission of the documents submitted in December 2018 as FEI 8 | |
| Noise Report in response to WYG's review (dated October 2018) | No date |
| Summary document: landscape and ecology | December 2018 |
| Summary document: Local plan review | December 2018 |
| Summary document: Sustainability | December 2018 |
| Summary document: Transportation and access | December 2018 |
| Summary document: Design and materials | December 2018 |
| Match day bus provision and management | December 2018 |
| Walking and cycling provision – proposed NCN Route 45 improvements | December 2018 |
| Heritage assets plan | December 2018 |
| AONB viewpoint plan | December 2018 |
| Existing site plan | December 2017 |
| Additional documents | |
| Resubmission Concept Masterplan 6470_T0540_01 | June 2019 |
| Further nature conservation enhancements | September 2018 |
| E191-FN20 Councillor Queries - FULL REPORT - Access Clarifications | April 2019 |
| Letter from FGRFC Chair | February 2019 |

All data contained in the application and Environmental Statement (December 2017) whilst the same as the previous application S.16/0043/OUT, is, in the view of the Applicant still valid.

It is very much hoped that the firm commitments contained within this application to the stadium design, a Community Use Agreement and match day public transport provision, together with the replacement of a grass training pitch with an *all-weather pitch*, will be sufficient for the Council to approve this second planning application for a new home ground for FGRFC.

Yours Sincerely,

Marcus Beddoe
Head of Development

Enc: One hard copy & 8 CDs of the Resubmission.
Due to confidential ecological data in 'Figures' and 'Appendix Part 2' – 2 CD copies of the confidential version of the application are included.