

APPEAL REF: APP/E3715/W/23/3322013

Coventry Stadium, Rugby Road, Coventry, CV8 3GJ

Demolition of existing buildings and outline application (with matters of access, layout, scale and appearance included) for residential development (Use Class C3) including means of access into the site from Rugby Road, provision of open space and associated infrastructure and provision of sports pitch, erection of pavilion and formation of associated car park.

I, Cecil Matthew Ford, company director of The Stadium Wimborne Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2BP will say as follows;

1. I am through my Poole Speedway Limited I am the promoter of Poole Speedway which has raced at The Stadium in Poole, Dorset since 1948. At various times I have also been a director of British Speedway Promoters Limited (formerly the British Speedway Promoters Association), Speedway's National Governing Body. I make this statement to oppose this Appeal. The facts to which I refer are within my own knowledge unless otherwise stated in which case I believe them to be true.
2. I have run Poole Speedway successfully for 24 years. My Poole team has been the most successful Speedway team in recent history having won its respective league championship on 10 occasions in that time.
3. During my time within the sport I have regularly served on the National Governing Body and believe I have all the knowledge and experience required to return Speedway to Coventry and to run it successfully.
4. In my view Coventry Stadium was one of the best venues for Speedway in the UK. I also believe that Coventry Speedway has a history and potential greater than my own club Poole. I would be thrilled at returning one of the greats to the sport and the prospect of returning Speedway to Coventry and leaving a legacy fills me with excitement.
5. On 25 May 2023 I spoke to Rob Godfrey, Chairman of the National Governing Body, to advise him of my interest in returning and running Speedway at Coventry. He said that he was delighted at my objective and confirmed that the National Governing Body would welcome the return of Speedway to Coventry.
6. I have the experience to run all aspects of a successful Speedway team. I know what income can be projected and the cost of all the business liabilities. Under my management Poole Speedway has traded profitably. No money has been borrowed, there has never been an overdraft and the business has no debt. Poole Speedway stands on its own two feet. My intention is to run Coventry Bees in the same way that I run Poole Speedway and I believe that I have the experience to do so.

7. One practical example is in relation to the requirement for Speedway tracks to be licensed to ensure that they meet all relevant rider and spectator health and safety features. I have taken all steps necessary to ensure that the Poole Speedway track satisfied the relevant regulations and was licensed throughout the 24 years of my management.
8. I also have the necessary means to run Speedway at Coventry Stadium. For example, my company holds the contracts of a significant number of Speedway riders. These contracts would enable me to assemble a competitive team at Coventry if the promotion rights were acquired.
9. I attended approximately over 50 Speedway events at Coventry Stadium between 1990 and 2016. Whilst I have not visited Coventry Stadium since its closure in 2016 I recall its layout and features. I am also aware that substantial damage that has occurred.
10. I believe that Speedway can be restored and successfully operated without using the Grandstand and that it would be viable financially to recommence use of track even though the stands themselves (as opposed to the terracing around the track) would not be able to be used at first.
11. I am aware through my experience of promoting speedway of the number of spectators who can reasonably be expected to attend this well-known venue. I believe that the same number of spectators that attend Poole Speedway would attend Coventry Speedway. The size and shape of the track itself is means that there is plenty of space for spectators to stand on the terraces. The appropriate ticket pricing at current rates would be £22 which, with likely levels of sponsorship, would be sufficient to pay a fair rent for use of the Stadium, pay all other business costs and expenses and operate Speedway at Coventry profitably.
12. As a former director of British Speedway Promoters Limited and from my recent conversation with its chairman, I do not believe there will be any issue preventing the National Governing Body from licensing Coventry Stadium for Speedway without use of the Grandstand.