

## Ella Casey

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**From:** Neil vatcher <Neil@scbgb.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 09 August 2021 12:23  
**To:** Erica Buchanan  
**Subject:** Coventry Speedway

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Erica

I write in my role as Speedway Control Bureau Co-Ordinator to officially register our objection to planning application R18/0186 on Brandon Stadium.

As you will be aware, the SCB is the governing body for British Speedway, authorised by the ACU (Auto Cycle Union) and we act as the independent body to ensure the adherence of all parties to the sport's regulations, as well as providing referees for all meetings held in the UK.

I would firstly repeat the message from previous correspondence: that Coventry Speedway was one of the sport's finest venues, attracting amongst the biggest crowds in the UK on a regular basis, and was used to stage a substantial number of Major Events due to its central location, transport links, and above all facilities and capacity which exceed many of our other venues.

The closure of Coventry, with no justification, has left a serious void in the sport in this country, and it remains a tragedy for the local area that the sport is absent when there is clearly such a large desire for it to still be taking place.

As the governing body of the sport, we fail to see how provision for a 3G football pitch – the demand and need for which appears to be questionable at best - would compensate in any way for the loss of one of the country's finest international motorsports venues. I have read the National Planning Policy Framework section 97c which refers to the benefits of the new facility needing to "clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use" and this application in no way satisfies those criteria.

I wish to draw your particular attention to the Coventry Speedway Viability Appraisal, as prepared by Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP).

I am alarmed by the assertion on page 2 that the "consultation" leading to the publication of this report has included "discussion" with various parties, one of which is listed as "Co-Ordinator – Speedway Control Board."

I can confirm once again that I am the co-ordinator of the SCB and I have had no such discussions with KKP. The report attempts to infer that discussions with a number of parties with some connection to the sport (but listed by position only) are responsible for the many muddled and misleading statements regarding speedway which follow; whereas in fact the only discussions I have had on the issue were alongside the Office Manager of British Speedway Promoters Ltd in order to provide evidence for the independent WYG report into the original planning application back in 2018.

Given that the outcome of that independent report was that it was conclusively proven that the case for "no ongoing need" for Brandon Stadium had not been made, and that many of the statements made in the original application had been incorrect, I find it most disappointing that my name (via my position) is attached to this latest Viability Appraisal when I have not contributed to it. It is misleading and disingenuous.

In my role as SCB co-ordinator I have viewed other such planning applications in recent years, including the Arena-Essex site referenced in the Coventry application, and also more recently Rye House. We are extremely concerned that repeated statements and allegations are made in these applications regarding the sport, many of which are proven to be false, and yet they continue to appear – essentially as a ‘copy and paste’ in future applications. We have asked Sport England for their views on this.

There are many items in the report which I am sure will be disputed by British Speedway Promoters Ltd, but I would like to specifically draw your attention to the issue of participation. This is a matter particularly close to my heart as for approaching a decade I have been in charge of the Great Britain Youth set-up, with responsibility for national teams up to and including Under-21 level.

Contrary to the assertions made in the report, the level of participation, interest and uptake in younger age groups has been steadily increasing over recent years. Our British Youth Championship is flourishing with more and more tracks interested in staging rounds, and as a sport we have been working hard on offering youngsters a clear progression which will hopefully lead to a professional career for those who make the grade, in addition to those who have already benefited. We currently have the largest and most exciting group of Under-21 riders coming through that I can ever remember throughout my involvement.

Reference is made to clubs struggling to run training schools, but this totally fails to take account of the very successful programmes which do exist using venues such as Belle Vue and King’s Lynn to name but two, and which also enables teenagers to take part in apprenticeship schemes and gain additional qualifications having left school.

The impression given by this report is that no Youth training takes place, and this could not be further from the truth. There is every reason to believe that over the next 3-5 years, more and more of our team places in domestic speedway will be taken up by direct graduates of these schemes.

I sincerely hope you will reject this inadequate planning application which appears to serve only the developers, and instead open up a wider discussion over how one of UK motorsport’s finest venues can be re-opened for its true purpose.

Yours sincerely  
Neil Vatcher  
SCB co-ordinator