

20th June 2018

By e-mail

Paul Morgan
Chair of Newbury Community Football Group

Chief Executive

West Berkshire District Council
Council Offices
Market Street Newbury
Berkshire RG14 5LD

Our Ref: nc/rae

Your Ref:

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Dear Mr Morgan

Newbury Football Club

Thank you for your email and attachment dated 4th June 2018. I will answer the points as you have outlined in your complaint.

1. We have been clear about the medium-long future use of the facility. It will be subsumed into the wider regeneration of London Road. In terms of the short term use following expiry of the lease in June 2018, we stated that it will be retained as open space for community use until it is required for redevelopment. We had been discussing with Newbury Town Council their potential involvement in operating the site in the short term. This has not materialised so West Berkshire Council will retain operational responsibility.
2. There has been considerable dialogue over the matter of the football club's lease and our publicly known intention to redevelop the London Road Industrial Estate. Correspondence with yourself started 8th December 2015, culminating in a meeting on 18th April 2016 between WBC Members and Officers, yourself, Newbury Football Club, St.Modwen, Berks & Bucks FA representatives and others. At that meeting we again reiterated clearly our development intentions, with input from St.Modwen as the Council's development partner, and at which we agreed to extend the football club's lease by another year. This extension was then granted to June 2018 and no further. As a point of courtesy I formally wrote to the football club secretary on 14th September 2017 reminding him that the lease will terminate on the 24th June 2018 and at which point the Council will take vacant possession. The Council has consistently made it clear that it is not our intention to retain the site for football over the long term and at no time have we suggested the lease would be extended again beyond the 24th June this year. As you know we have also sought to facilitate the use of an alternative venue for the present football club.
3. We have made it clear that it will be retained for public use prior to redevelopment. We need to survey the site and the Football Club need extra time to remove their equipment. We aim to inform the public of our plan for the site in September. We are fully committed to retaining this green space right up to the point that it is needed for redevelopment.
4. We are not closing the facility until it is required for redevelopment. We are also of the view that our proposal will encourage far greater and wider use of the site than is currently achieved.

5. The Council needs to be able to manage the facility flexibly over the short term and has taken the view that this is best achieved by retaining control itself.
6. The Council has been in discussions with Newbury Football Club over many years. It has provided lease extensions where appropriate but it has been made clear that the site will be redeveloped and that at some point the lease will not be renewed. We have reached that point. The redevelopment of London Road has been in plan for 15 years. The redevelopment is integral to the continued growth of Newbury with the site providing much needed housing and employment land. The expiry of the lease does not deny the community access to the site. Indeed our plans are likely to enable greater access.
7. The site will remain available to the community until the redevelopment starts. Again I would reiterate we will retain the land as green space and seek to increase community use right up to the point it is required for redevelopment.
8. The Council will apply for any planning permission needed but until the redevelopment starts we are not proposing any change to the underlying current use. We are fully aware of the procedures required in respect of a facility designated as an ACV and at the point of a potential disposal, due process will be followed.
9. We are not closing the facility to community use in the short term.
10. We see no evidence that we have acted in an inappropriate manner.
11. As stated we are retaining the facility for community use until redevelopment commences. We remain of the view that the Club are able to relocate and offers have been made to that effect which the Club has chosen not to take up.
12. We are not closing the facility. We are not renewing our lease with Newbury Football Club as agreed with them 2 years ago.
13. There is no evidence of this. Our actions have been widely reported in the Press and we have held public meetings to clarify our approach to the London Road regeneration.
14. The Council's aspirations regarding London Road were initially set out in 2003 and have been developed since culminating in St Modwen being appointed as Development Partner.
15. There has been extensive consultation and the Council's objectives regarding the redevelopment of London Road have been clear since 2003.
16. Perhaps evidence of this could be provided?
17. We have made a commitment to keep the land available for community use until redevelopment. Once the ground has been inspected we will set out plans in September for how the ground will be made available to the public.

In terms of your demands;

1. I hope we have done that.
2. We have no intention of renegeing on our agreed plans.

3. We are happy to meet with NCFG and have done so in the past but NCFG need to recognise that WBC have long standing plans regarding London Road which includes redevelopment of the site.

4. We intend to progress in the manner outlined in this response.

I hope this addresses the specific issues highlighted in your complaint.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Carter', written in a cursive style.

Nick Carter
Chief Executive