

COUNCIL – 5 DECEMBER 2019

## **WOKING FOOTBALL CLUB DEVELOPMENT**

### **Executive Summary**

This report advises Council of the action taken as a result of two resolutions passed by Council, on 17 October 2019, in respect of the proposed Woking Football Club development.

### **Recommendation**

Council is requested to:

#### **RESOLVE That**

The action taken as a result of the two resolutions passed by Council, on 17 October 2019, in respect of the proposed Woking Football Club development be noted.

**Background Papers:** None.

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**Date Published:** 5 December 2019



### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 17 October 2019, Council passed two resolutions in respect of the proposed Woking Football Club development. These were as follows:-

#### Resolution 1

*“That this Council requests GolDev, Woking Football Club and other stakeholders reassess their plan to redevelop the Laithwaite Community Stadium and surrounding area in light of the petition and concerns of local people.”*

The petition was in the following terms:-

#### ***“Stop Extreme Proposal for FC Stadium Expansion and over 1,000 New Homes.***

*The local area, it's infrastructure and services, simply cannot support this extreme proposal for a 10k capacity stadium (size not required based on current and projected game attendance) and over 1000 flats.*

- *Influx of 2k new inhabitants would add unsustainable traffic and parking pressure on already congested local roads.*
- *Flat residents will have at least one car. The proposal to only provide 500 car parking spaces for the flats is untenable.*
- *Extreme high density flat designs and building heights are not in keeping with local architecture, are visually intrusive, significantly blocking light and privacy for local residents and will significantly alter the character of the local area.*
- *Influx of people cannot be supported by local services, such as already oversubscribed schools and doctors surgeries.*
- *Stadium will emit immense light and noise pollution for local residents and high levels of transient people in the local area and on the roads.*
- *The construction of this development will provide mass disruption on local roads, tremendous noise and environmental pollution for local residents which is undesirable.”*

#### Resolution 2

*“That the Motion be supported.”*

The motion was:-

*“Council notes that a capacity of 5000 is sufficient for a football team to compete in League Two. Council calls on officers to assess the effect on current proposals for development at Kingfield of stadium capacities at various levels between 6000 and 8000.”*

### 2.0 Action Taken

- 2.1 Prior to the Council meeting on 17 October 2019, Officers had required GolDev to produce plans showing reduced stadium capacities of approximately 6,000, 7,000 and 8,000. When produced, these plans showed actual capacities of 8,087, 7,001 and 6,036 (and retained the retail and commercial floor space required by the Club to be financially viable). Copies of the plans are appended to this report as Appendix 1.

## Woking Football Club Development

- 2.2 When the plans for a stadium with a capacity of 9,026 were approved for submission to the local planning authority (by the Head of Democratic and Legal Services on behalf of the Council as landowner), an undertaking was obtained from GolDev. This provides for GolDev, if required by the Council, to seek planning permission for, and construct, a stadium with a capacity less than that approved.
- 2.3 The Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, and Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, met with representatives of Woking Football Club, GolDev and Dukelease on 13 November 2019 to address the issues raised in the Council resolutions.
- 2.4 Mr Bryant and Mrs Clarke paid particular attention to identifying what effect reducing the spectator capacity of the new stadium would have on the quantum of residential development required to finance the overall development.
- 2.5 Woking Football Club confirmed that they could not agree to the footprint of the stadium being reduced if this impacted on the quantum of retail and commercial floor space provided for in the proposed development. This was because the retail and commercial floor space shown on the plans for the 9,026 spectator capacity stadium formed part of their financial plan, and was the minimum required for the Club to be commercially viable once the stadium was constructed and operational. The Club also commented that, in an ideal world, they would like more such space.
- 2.6 It is clear from the alternative plans that there would only be a small reduction in ground take if a 8,087 or 7,001 spectator capacity stadium was constructed (the reduction is coloured blue on the plans appended as Appendix 1). There would be no reduction in ground take if the 6,036 spectator capacity stadium was constructed (as it would be all-seater).
- 2.7 GolDev was asked to calculate the financial savings that could result from constructing the reduced capacity stadia. This would enable a view to be taken on any consequential reduction in residential development at the site. GolDev submitted this information after the meeting, and it is appended to this report as Appendix 2. The calculations reveal that a maximum of two flats could be removed from the development. This is immaterial in the context of the proposed development and would have no effect on its bulk or mass.
- 2.8 Woking Football Club and GolDev were asked to consider, and respond, to the issues raised in the petition. A written response has been received. This is appended to this report as Appendix 3 (the responses are in red type). The Planning Committee will consider these issues when it determines the planning application for the Kingfield development (which was submitted on 29 November 2019).

### 3.0 Implications

#### Financial

- 3.1 None arising directly from this report.

#### Human Resource/Training and Development

- 3.2 None arising directly from this report.

#### Community Safety

- 3.3 None arising directly from this report.

#### Risk Management

- 3.4 None arising directly from this report.

Sustainability

3.5 None arising directly from this report.

Equalities

3.6 None arising directly from this report.

Safeguarding

3.7 None arising directly from this report.

**4.0 Conclusions**

4.1 Reducing the spectator capacity of the new stadium does not result in a material reduction in the quantum of residential development required to fund the overall development.

4.2 The Council (as landowner) has entered into legal agreements that allow Woking Football Club and GolDev to construct a development in the form proposed by them (subject to planning permission being obtained).

4.3 Woking Football Club and GolDev do not agree with the objections raised by the petitioners. The Planning Committee will consider these objections when it determines the planning application.

REPORT ENDS