

**EXAMINATION INTO THE SOUNDNESS OF
OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2036**

**SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF
MR NIKOLAS BUDIMIR (PERSON ID 94)
AND
THE SAVE OXFORD STADIUM GROUP**

**IN RELATION TO MATTER 6: SPECIFIC SITES
6J: POLICY SP52: OXFORD STADIUM**

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Carter Jonas

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Carter Jonas is instructed by Mr Nikolas Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group to respond to the Inspectors' Matter 6J: Oxford Stadium questions; namely:

- Whether Policy SP52: Oxford Stadium is positively worded enough to encourage the delivery of beneficial development on the site;
- Whether the policy allows sufficient flexibility in the face of future changes in circumstances;
- Whether the Plan's approach towards the amount of development and the balance of land uses (and where appropriate open space and sports provision is sound?

1.2 Steven Sensecall, Head of Planning at Carter Jonas for the South and South West will be representing Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group at the Matter 6 hearing session.

1.3 Consistent with Policy SP52 and the supporting text at paragraphs 9.260 – 9.265 in the Plan, and subject to being able to secure an interest in Oxford Stadium, Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group are committed to returning greyhound racing and speedway to Oxford and to providing other compatible community and leisure uses on the site. They are also confident that any residential enabling development can be accommodated without affecting adversely the operation or heritage interest of the Oxford Stadium site.

1.4 Mr Budimir is confident that he can turn Oxford Stadium into a first-class leisure facility for the people of Oxford, and that he can do so in a manner that is both viable and sustainable (see his response to the Proposed Submission Draft Plan).

1.5 Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group would also draw on paragraph 97 in the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework"), which sets out the criteria against which proposals to build on existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should be assessed. Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group's clear view is that in so far as the Oxford Stadium is concerned, these criteria have not been met – it has an economically future as a greyhound and speedway stadium and community facility.

2.0 WHETHER POLICY SP52: OXFORD STADIUM IS POSITIVELY WORDED ENOUGH TO ENCOURAGE THE DELIVERY OF BENEFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE

2.1 The wording of Policy SP52 is positive enough to encourage the delivery of beneficial development on the site.

2.2 Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group welcome and support the policy commitment to revive the use of the stadium for greyhound racing and/or speedway with other community or leisure uses. This is wholly consistent with their aims and objectives and their business strategy for the site.

- 2.3 Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group also welcome and support the reference to enabling development, which again chimes with their approach to the regeneration of the site.
- 2.4 The feasibility work done to date by Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group shows that, subject to an appropriate level of enabling development, it is viable to bring greyhound racing and speedway back to the Oxford Stadium and that in so doing, the heritage interest of the stadium can be maintained. Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group are also prepared to be bound by a legally enforceable commitment to modernise and refurbish the stadium to facilitate recommencement of its former uses and the introduction of additional community and leisure uses.
- 2.5 The policy's approach to parking is noted and accepted: the stadium is in a sustainable location with good access to existing and planned public transport provision.
- 2.6 Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group have read and endorse the Council's response to the Inspectors' question 45 as set in the Inspectors' second set of initial questions and comments: a commercially viable solution to the re-introduction of greyhound racing and speedway at this venue is possible.
- 2.7 In support of their view that Policy SP52 is positively worded and can deliver beneficial development on the Oxford Stadium site, Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group would also draw on the guidance in the Framework; in particular paragraph 92, which state *inter alia* that planning policies should plan positively for the provision community facilities, including sports venues, and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.
- 3.0 WHETHER THE POLICY ALLOWS SUFFICIENT FLEXIBILITY IN THE FACE OF FUTURE CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES**
- 3.1 Mr Budimir and the Save Oxford Stadium Group are confident that they can bring forward and implement a policy compliant scheme for the Oxford Stadium site. If subsequently, there are changes in circumstance that require a change of direction/ the consideration of other perhaps non-policy compliant uses, it would be a case of the owner/operators making a case to and working with the Local Planning Authority having regard to section 70(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 4.0 WHETHER THE PLAN'S APPROACH TOWARDS THE AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE BALANCE OF LAND USES (AND WHERE APPROPRIATE OPEN SPACE AND SPORTS PROVISION) IS SOUND**
- 4.1 Oxford Stadium is a Conservation Area. Paragraph 185 in the Framework requires plans to have regard to heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In these circumstances, the policy approach requires the "desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation."

- 4.2 Paragraph 200 in the Framework makes it clear that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas, to enhance or better reveal their significance. It also goes on to state that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
- 4.3 The Oxford Stadium Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the historic importance of the Stadium to the community for both greyhound and speedway with a 'history of this use since 1939' and states that the location and character of the Stadium show 'the socio-economic character of Oxford's eastern suburbs during the 20th century'.
- 4.4 Against this policy background, the amount of development and the balance of land uses proposed in Policy SP52 is appropriate and sound in that it will assist in bringing back into use the asset that is central to the purpose and function of the conservation area in a manner that will sustain its community value while at the same time recognising its local distinctiveness and identity; and its rarity value. It will also protect the stadium's spatial character, which is central to understanding the significance of this heritage asset.