

3 December 2003

Craven Cottage Stadium (Fulham Football Club)

in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

planning application no. 2003/02744/FUL

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Act 1999; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 – strategic planning application stage 1 referral.

Upgrading works to enable the provision of a 22,000 capacity all-seater football stadium by: the provision of seating and the extension of the existing roof over the north stand (Hammersmith End); the provision of seating and the construction of a temporary roof over the south terrace (Putney End), together with cladding the south elevation; the erection of a temporary three storey structure to provide additional hospitality facilities at each end of the north stand and a similar temporary three storey structure at the river end of the south terrace; the installation of windows in the rear (river) elevation of the west stand; and the erection of four floodlight batteries, each supported on a single pole. All temporary structures and seating are required for a period of 3 years.

Context

1 On 15 October 2003 Hammersmith & Fulham Council consulted the Mayor of London on a proposal to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 the Mayor has the same opportunity as other statutory consultees to comment on the proposal. This report sets out information for the Mayor's use in deciding what comments to make.

2 The application is referable under Category 1C1(a)(c) of the Schedule of the Order 2000: *"Development which comprises or includes the erection of a building [which] is more than 25 metres high and is adjacent to the River Thames [or] is more than 30 metres high and outside the City of London."*

3 If Hammersmith & Fulham Council subsequently decides that it is minded to grant planning permission, it must first allow the Mayor an opportunity to decide whether to direct the Council to refuse permission.

Site description

4 The site is adjacent to the River Thames, on the north bank covering an area of approximately 2.26 hectares. The Thames lies on the western boundary, Stevenage Road on the eastern boundary, Stevenage Park and Bishops Park on the northern and southern boundaries

respectively. Beyond Stevenage Road lies the residential area of Fulham. Bishops Park is approximately 1.5 hectares of Metropolitan Open Land, whilst Stevenage Park provides a small buffer with a small residential area north of the stadium.

5 The site has been home to the Football Club since 1894 and the Stevenage Road (east) Stand is Grade II Listed. Unique aspects include Craven Cottage in the north west corner of the ground and a London Plane tree on the riverside end of the Putney (south) stand. The existing Stevenage Road stand rises to 12.4 metres, whilst the Riverside (west) stand is 14 metres at its highest point.

Details of the proposal

6 Fulham Football Club aims to provide temporary stadium facilities at the existing Craven Cottage ground to comply with the Football Spectators Act and the Safety at Sports Grounds Act. The proposed scheme comprises the demolition of the upper tier on the South Terrace, with temporary seating at the North and South Stands, a temporary roof over the South Stand and extension of the roof over the North Stand. Facilities will be refurbished in the West Stand, including two new hospitality lounges, and in the East stand with further hospitality boxes. The existing floodlights will be replaced, and the ticket office refurbished.

7 The current stadium capacity is 21,200 spectators, of which 13,435 is accounted for by standing terraces. The proposals are for an all-seater stadium, to comply with Football Association rules, with a capacity of 22,000 spectators. This is a net increase with 13,435 standing spaces being lost and approximately 14,500 new seats being provided.

Case history

8 The site has been subject to a significant case history, the key outcomes of which are as follows:

9 **1990** – A planning application was submitted for permission to demolish all buildings on the site except Craven Cottage and the front facade of the Stevenage Road (east) stand, and to erect 270 flats, a riverside cafe/restaurant (642 sq.m.), shops (1,032 sq.m.), an auditorium for exhibitions, plays, concerts and conferences (2,853 sq.m), a riverside walk and 492 parking spaces. The application was refused and an appeal against this was lodged. This led to Hammersmith & Fulham serving a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the site. The Secretary of State conjoined the appeal and the CPO proposals as the subject of a Public Inquiry. November 1990, the Secretary of State refused to confirm the CPO, refused the Council's related planning application for 81 flats, ancillary parking and retention of the football pitch, and dismissed the appeal by the applicant.

10 **June 1992** – A Public Inquiry was held following the Council's refusal of planning permission and listed building consent to demolish Stevenage Road stand and turnstiles and develop the site for 271 flats, a riverside walk and restaurant and community rooms. The appeal was dismissed.

11 **March 1994** – A planning application and application for listed building consent for redevelopment of the site submitted. Provision of approximately 15,000 capacity all-seater stadium with 142 residential units and 156 parking spaces, a part-cantilevered walkway over the river, with some encroachment onto the Thames' foreshore. Hammersmith & Fulham Council resolved to grant planning permission in June 1995, with the applications called in by the Secretary of State to assess housing density, car parking and impact on the River Thames. In August 1996 the Secretary of State granted planning permission, which was challenged by Dido Berkeley on behalf of Thamesbank local amenity group on the grounds that the Inspector had

applied the wrong approach when considering development plan policies, and that no decision had been properly made as to whether an environmental statement should have been required. The legal challenge was dismissed by The High Court and the Court of Appeal, but a further appeal to the House of Lords was successful on the grounds that the Secretary of State did not consider whether the development should be the subject of an environmental impact assessment. The 1996 planning permission and listed building consent were therefore quashed.

12 **May 2001** – Planning permission granted for a new 30,000 capacity all-seater stadium. A legal challenge has been made against this permission and to date the permission has not been implemented.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

13 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Urban design *draft London Plan: PPG1*
- Transport *draft London Plan; the Mayor’s Transport Strategy; PPG13*
- Parking *draft London Plan; the Mayor’s Transport Strategy; PPG13*
- Biodiversity *draft London Plan; the Biodiversity Strategy; PPG9*
- Access/equal opportunities *draft London Plan*
- Culture *draft London Plan; the Culture Strategy*
- Sustainable development *draft London Plan: PPG3; PPG13*
- River Thames/flooding *draft London Plan; PPG25; RPG3B*

Culture

14 The draft London Plan seeks to promote and develop London’s sporting facilities. In general, sports facilities should follow a sequential approach to choice of location, have good access, including by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians, be fully accessible to all sections of the community and where appropriate ensure multiple use of facilities, particularly in areas of deficiency.

15 The nature of the proposal is very specialist in that the stadium will be used by Fulham Football Club, which is currently in the Premiership. TfL currently shares stadium facilities with Queens Park Rangers at Loftus Road, W12. This proposal will enable the club to return to Craven Cottage, which it moved out of in May 2002 to enable the redevelopment of the stadium.

16 The club is seeking to either relocate within the borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, or secure the permanent redevelopment of the Craven Cottage site.

17 This temporary arrangement will ensure the club has the facilities to remain on the site until a permanent solution for the club is secured. In accordance with draft London Plan principles of a sequential approach to facilities this proposal makes use of existing facilities and the increase in stadium capacity is relatively minor. Details of site accessibility are considered under Transport for London comments in paragraphs 26–27 below.

18 From the strategic planning point of view, it is important not to prejudice a future permanent solution for Fulham Football Club through temporary provisions, but this has to be balanced against the short term benefits of this location. Hammersmith & Fulham Council should work with the applicant, ensuring that it uses its reasonable endeavours to bring forward a permanent solution, and to demonstrate this to the Council’s satisfaction.

Design

19 The design of the scheme relates to the temporary nature of proposal by providing a utilitarian solution to upgrading the ground to the required standard. In strategic terms, balanced against the benefits of retaining the football use, making use of and upgrading existing facilities, the design as a temporary solution does not raise any strategic planning concerns. However, if Hammersmith & Fulham wishes to seek a more long-term design solution at this stage, this would be supported.

Biodiversity

20 The application site is adjacent to two Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The River Thames is a Site of Metropolitan Importance, and Bishops Park is a Site of Borough Grade I Importance. From the details submitted, there will not be any significant impacts on the biodiversity of either site.

Sustainable design and construction

21 Policy 4B.6 of the draft London Plan establishes that development should meet the highest standards of sustainable design and construction. This includes how land and buildings are being re-used, how resources are conserved, how the impacts of noise, pollution, flooding and micro-climate are reduced and how the natural environment is conserved and enhanced.

22 The proposal represents the temporary re-use of existing facilities, upgrading them in line with Premier League standards. The applicant has submitted a statement from BMT Fluid Mechanics Limited, who have undertaken a wind effects study on sailing conditions on the Thames. They conclude that the proposal will be unlikely to significantly impact on sailing conditions.

23 There is insufficient further information within the application to determine in detail whether a sustainable approach to design has been taken and the applicant should submit a statement to Hammersmith & Fulham Council to demonstrate its approach to sustainable development.

Blue Ribbon Network

24 The site falls within the Thames Policy Area so the proposal is assessed against the Blue Ribbon Network policies set out in the draft London Plan.

25 The draft London Plan Policies 2A.11-13 establish the principles of the Blue Ribbon Network, and how development adjacent to it should be considered. This is expanded in Annex 2 of the draft London Plan. Policy 2.13 sets out objectives for development adjacent to the Blue Ribbon Network, seeking the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, respect for waterway heritage, enhancement of opportunities for views and access to the water, and the provision of suitable flood defences.

26 No work will be carried out on the river wall or river course, but there is little further information on the potential impact, for example in terms of increased water run-off. The applicant should demonstrate to the GLA how potential impacts on the Blue Ribbon Network have been identified, mitigated where appropriate, and how opportunities to provide greater views and access have been considered.

Access and equal opportunities

27 Policy 4B.5 of the draft London Plan seeks to create an inclusive environment where all future developments meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. In terms of a planning application the applicant is expected to demonstrate how principles of inclusive design are incorporated through an Access Statement. The statement should cover how the development can be used by as many people as possible, without undue effort, separation, or special treatment, how there is freedom to participate equally in the development's mainstream activities and that the development values diversity and difference. The access statement should be treated as more than a commitment to meet the minimum standards of Part M of the Building Regulations.

28 This proposal, although temporary, relates to a development of cultural and community significance, and traditional constraints to inclusion, such as the need to provide viewing platforms for wheelchair users or the provision of step access only to stands, should be addressed through innovative approaches to inclusive design. The temporary nature of the development should not be a barrier to considering inclusive design principles.

29 In terms of provision for disabled spectators, the applicant states that there will be a net increase in the capacity through relocation from pitch side to new facilities at either end of the temporary seating. The plans indicate that this better integrates the spectators in a greater manner than may have been the case in the past, and is a welcome approach. Nonetheless a full access statement should still be provided.

Floodlighting

30 The existing floodlights at the stadium rise to approximately 47 metres and are supported by four pylons. There are four floodlights, one at each corner of the ground directly adjacent to the east and west stands. They were disconnected when Fulham Football Club moved to the Loftus Road stadium, and would require major refurbishment to be returned to use. The Premier League set an illumination standard, currently 800 lux, which the proposal would have to meet.

31 This provides the opportunity to improve the quality of the floodlighting in terms of visual impact and light spill. The proposed floodlights will each be supported on a single pylon, located where the existing floodlights are, and will rise to approximately 38 metres. Whilst it appears that the new floodlights will be of greater efficiency, the supporting justification is limited in demonstrating that this is the best solution for floodlighting. Hammersmith & Fulham Council should ensure that the applicant has worked to provide a floodlighting solution that meets Premier League standards but minimises light spill.

Transport for London comments

32 There are no proposals to increase the level of parking available so the impact on the Transport for London Road Network should not increase from the levels prior to May 2002 when the stadium was last used by the club for competitive matches.

33 The stadium has a PTAL of 2. Bus service 424 terminates close to the stadium and there are frequent bus services on Palace Road. The nearest rail service is at Putney Bridge station on the District Line, some 1.5km away.

34 When the stadium was last used by the club, surveys showed that 23% of supporters arrive by rail and 50% of these use Putney Bridge. Management of matchday crowds requires use of the emergency stairs and additional staff presence at Putney Bridge station. As part of

the application approved in 2001 for redevelopment of the stadium, a section 106 agreement was concluded providing funding for station improvements to improve safety and to cover additional station staffing costs on matchdays. This reflected the additional stadium capacity, which would have been increased to 30,000 and also an aspiration to achieve 42% of supporters arriving by rail. Although the current application only provides for a small increase in stadium capacity, London Underground will still face additional costs in safely managing matchday crowds once the stadium is brought back into use. Further discussions are required with Fulham FC to ensure that necessary safety improvements and matchday staffing arrangements at Putney Bridge station can be funded through an appropriate financial contribution.

London Development Agency comments

35 The Agency support the principle of improvements to sport and spectator provision within London. It wishes to see the issues in the report satisfactorily addressed. The applicant should also demonstrate how consideration has been given to incorporating renewable energy technologies as part of the scheme.

Local planning authority's position

36 The site is designated in Hammersmith & Fulham's Adopted Unitary Development Plan (1994) and First draft Deposit UDP (1999) as a site proposal for retention and enhancement of listed buildings in association with football, other spectator sports, or other appropriate leisure uses, the provision of a public riverside walk and residential development reasonable to achieve these objectives and in accordance with UDP policy. The site is also within a Conservation Area, the Thames Policy Area and is designated for the Thames Path National Trail.

Legal considerations

37 Under the arrangements set out in article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 the Mayor has an opportunity to make representations to Hammersmith & Fulham Council at this stage. If the Council subsequently resolves to grant planning permission, it must allow the Mayor an opportunity to decide whether to direct it to refuse planning permission. There is no obligation at this present stage for the Mayor to indicate his intentions regarding a possible direction, and no such decision should be inferred from the Mayor's comments unless specifically stated.

Financial considerations

38 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

39 Considering the case on its merits it represents an approach to accommodating the needs of Fulham Football Club in the short term, by upgrading existing facilities and providing accommodation on the site with which they are historically associated.

40 There are outstanding issues that need clarifying for the proposal to meet the strategic planning principles established in the draft London Plan. The applicant should submit statements demonstrating that the proposal incorporates principles of inclusivity and sustainable design and construction, and should also demonstrate how the proposal may impact or enhance the Blue Ribbon Network.

for further information, contact Planning Decisions Unit:

Giles Dolphin, Planning Decisions Manager

020 7983 4271 email giles.dolphin@london.gov.uk

Colin Wilson, Acting Team Leader Development Control

020 7983 4743 email colin.wilson@london.gov.uk

Thomas Carpen, Case Officer

020 7983 6590 email thomas.carpen@london.gov.uk
