



Dear Sir,

Firstly, we'd like to make it abundantly clear that we have no desire to delay nor to object to this planning application. However, we have grave concerns about the lack of protection afforded to Southend United Football Club within it.

Whilst Southend United owner and Chairman Ron Martin and Southend City Council have been working together on the Fossetts Farm development plans, the key stakeholders at Southend United, the supporters, have had very little input and we believe it important that this changes.

The recent White Paper on Football Governance attempts to address the dangerous situation in which many clubs across the UK find themselves and we are grateful for the cross-party Parliamentary support that we have received, in particular from our local MP Anna Firth. We are also grateful for the ongoing support from the Football Supporters Association, as they help us to navigate a potentially landmark moment in our club's history.

Whilst we understand the need for housing in Southend-on-Sea as the city council works towards its housing targets, and that this development will generate much revenue for all parties involved, we are concerned that the cultural significance of the football club is being forgotten or lost behind those considerations. Whilst football *is* a business, its cultural and social implications for supporters and for the residents of Southend-on-Sea amount to so much more. Southend United is an important, representative institution of the city of Southend-on-Sea, and its interests and future therefore deserve protection.

Section 106 agreements are a covenant between developers and local core stakeholders, to protect and promote the interests of the local community. Whilst we note that there are many protections included in the Section 106 proposals for the previously-accepted planning application, we are saddened to see that Southend United is not mentioned in it. This is alarming, especially when you consider that the club is a named joint-applicant and the new stadium is a cornerstone of the project.

We therefore urge you in the strongest possible terms to consider using the upcoming new Section 106 agreement for this latest planning application, or any other tangible mechanisms, to better safeguard the interests and future of Southend United.

We implore you to formalise the following:

- The tenant of the new stadium at Fossetts Farm *must* be "Southend United FC or a direct successor football club".
- A longer lease period. 20 years does not provide certainty. There are examples of other tenant sports clubs across the UK getting stadium leases of 95 years or more. We'd hope that the council would like to keep the football club in the city for a lot longer than 20 years and this is an excellent way to guarantee it.
- A developer contribution to upkeep and maintain Roots Hall until such time as the club moves to Fossetts Farm. We are gravely concerned and embarrassed about the state of Roots Hall, especially regarding health and safety and its ability to host football matches for another 2-3 years (the proposed timeline of the first phase of the Fossetts development).
- A rent-free period for the football club at the new stadium and training facilities. This will afford the club the ability to settle in and truly feel at home, until such time as the promised 365 days per year non-matchday revenue streams are realised, likely once construction of the North Stand is completed.
- Any mechanism that allows the club to regain and retain ownership of its stadium. Third party stadium ownership has caused many problems for other clubs and we believe this is an avoidable pitfall and a fair request.
- Formal supporter consultation regarding supporter-facing areas of the development. Concourses, parking, accessibility and branding are all part of the modern supporter's experience. We ask for open focus groups and fan surveys to take place, allowing us the ability to feel like this stadium is a place that we can call home for generations to come.

We appreciate that some of the above might not be possible, but we ask you to consider viewing some of the points as more than simply planning considerations. Southend United is of huge significance to the culture and fabric of the city and has the potential to positively impact its future image and prosperity. We therefore implore you to do what you can to work with us and help to protect its interests and cement its future.

Other assets of community value e.g., schools and libraries, can have their ownership specified and their interests/futures protected in Section 106 agreements. A football club, from a cultural perspective, is no different.

Southend City Council can create a legacy for itself as one of the first local councils in the UK to implement some of the recommendations in the White Paper on Football Governance, in order to play a role in safeguarding the future of its local football club. We believe this level of engagement and respect will further Southend City Council's commitment to co-production, as it works towards its Southend 2050 roadmap.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Kind regards,

The combined supporters groups of Southend United Football Club