



Otley Town AFC, The Old Showground, Pool Road, Otley, LS21 1DY
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Date: 14th July 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to the Hybrid Planning Application on the site of East of Otley, including the Relief Road. Case ID: 21/01671/OT

We are writing on behalf of the Committee and Members of Otley Town AFC with regards to the above planning application, especially in relation to the proposed East of Otley Relief Road from Pool Road to Leeds Road.

Taking into account the planning application in its current form and after consultation with the West Riding County Football Association, the Football Foundation and Sport England, Otley Town AFC's conclusion is to **submit a holding objection** to the application.

Otley Town AFC is a fully accredited football club and is affiliated with the West Riding County Football Association and the Wharfedale and District Football Association. We have teams playing in the West Yorkshire Association Football League, the Craven and District Football League and the Harrogate Mundial Veterans League. Our junior section play football in the Harrogate and District Junior Football League and the Craven, Aire and Wharfe Junior Football League.

Otley Town AFC was formed in its current guise in 1972 following the amalgamation of Otley AFC and Crabtree Mann and has offered junior football provision in Otley since 1999 when Otley Express merged with the Club, they themselves having been formed in 1980. The club has been playing football at The Old Showground on Pool Road since the Show moved from the land to the current location on Bridge Street after the second world war - over 75 years ago. Today, the Club has 370 registered playing members with 260 members aged 6-16 years old, both male and female, and 110 aged 16 and over, including a recently added Veterans (35+) team. Due to the increasing number of players who have joined the Club during the previous season, we have successfully applied to the West Riding FA to affiliate an additional senior men's team, which would take the total number of adult teams to five.

The main reasons for the Club submitting a **holding objection** are:

- 1) Proximity of the proposed roundabout to the corner of our main pitch;
- 2) Risk of ball strike from our pitches to the new relief road/roundabout;
- 3) Access to our ground by foot after completion of the road;
- 4) Access to our ground during the construction,
- 5) Risk of drainage of surface water on our pitch(es), and;
- 6) The future of our ground and pitches.



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Proximity of the proposed roundabout to the corner of our main pitch

The proposed roundabout at the junction of Pool Road shows an exit road, presumably access to our ground, which appears to overlap the north west corner of our main pitch. We would like reassurances that the exit road does not overlap the corner of the pitch and maintains a safe distance away from the playing surface.

Risk of ball strike from our pitches to the new relief road/roundabout

The proposed relief road and roundabout appear to run close to our main playing pitch, therefore there is a risk of football ball strike. This could be a nuisance under the Environmental Health legislation and could therefore prejudice the use of our ground as a football field. We would therefore like to see mitigation put in place to prevent this from occurring. We note that the Football Foundation has suggested a ball-stop netting to be placed alongside the pitch in order to mitigate against football ball strike and would like to see plans include this going forward. We have some concerns that even the use of ball stop netting might not be fully effective, given the short distance between the pitch and the road.

Access to our ground by foot after completion of the road

The vast majority of our playing members are children under the age of 18 and a lot of our spectators and parents are elderly. As a sports club, we actively encourage our members, parents and spectators to walk or cycle to the ground where possible to reduce the traffic travelling through Otley but to also improve the health of our members. The proposals do not include provision for access to our ground by foot or by bicycle. We do not feel that it is safe to expect our members to attempt to cross a busy road in order to attend football training or matches at the Club. Provision should be made to ensure that visitors of all ages can attend and safely access our facilities. A footbridge or underpass should be considered to allow access.

Access to our ground during the construction

Due to the size of our Club, access is needed to our facilities 7-days a week due to the varying training and match times that are required. During match days, the volume of traffic to the ground increases as our opponents drive from all over West Yorkshire and the Craven District to come and play. Match days can occur on any day or evening during the week. We also need access during the day Monday-Friday for deliveries and for our groundsman/volunteers to maintain the pitches and the surrounding areas. We must ensure that access to the club grounds is maintained fully during the construction process.



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Risk of drainage of surface water on our pitch(es)

We have “extremely good playing surfaces” according to the Football Foundation and in their most recent inspection our pitches were recorded as very good in all aspects. We have never had an issue with drainage and we do not postpone fixtures on the main two pitches due to waterlogging. Our pitches are regularly selected and hired out by external League and Cup competitions to host their semi finals and finals on due to the quality of the surface, even at the end of the season, including most recently in June and July 2021 when we hosted two Wharfedale Triangle League Cup Finals. We seek assurances that ground surface water from the proposed road and housing development will be sufficiently drained so that it does not have a detrimental impact upon the quality of the playing surfaces we currently enjoy.

The future of our ground and pitches

We seek assurances that our land will not be under threat from future developments as part of this, or any other potential planning applications that may come about. We would like to secure an agreement on a long-term tenureship that is at an appropriate cost for the use of sporting land.

Overall, we are not against the proposed road or housing development and can see potential long-term benefits, however, we feel that it is important that as a growing and important part of the Otley Community, we need to have some safeguards in place to ensure that the Club, players and pitches are protected both during and after the development of the road and the wider housing plans. It is for this reason that we are **submitting a holding objection** to the application.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Featherstone
Otley Town AFC Secretary

Kai Arter
Otley Town AFC Chairman