

Mr G Prentice  
Team Leader (Development Management South)  
Planning and Sustainable Development  
Aberdeen City Council  
Business Hub 4, Ground Floor North  
Marischal College  
Broad Street  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1AB

Dear Mr Prentice

**PLANNING APPLICATION 170021/DPP:**

**PROPOSED COMMUNITY AND SPORTS FACILITIES, FOOTBALL ACADEMY, (COMPRISING OUTDOOR PITCHES, PAVILION, ANCILLARY BUILDINGS), STADIUM (20,000 CAPACITY), ANCILLARY USES, FORMATION OF ACCESS ROADS, PARKING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND ENGINEERING WORKS.**

**LAND AT WEST KINGSFORD (NORTH OF A944 ROAD), SKENE ROAD, ABERDEEN AB15 8QR**

**Response from Kingswells Community Council to**

**(a) Supplementary Information provided by Aberdeen Football Club**

**(b) Key aspects of the Transport Assessment (TA)**

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

There is nothing in AFC's Supplementary Information that alters the views expressed in KCC's original submission (March 2017).

**Breach of Planning Policy**

This issue remains a fundamental objection in terms of non-compliance with the ALDP, loss of greenbelt, coalescence of communities, and the encouragement of a future development corridor along the A944.

**Environmental Impacts**

The huge visual impact of the stadium building on the surrounding semi-rural landscape is still completely unacceptable.

Despite AFC's assurances, sky glow is likely to greatly exceed the current glow from commercial and domestic buildings in Westhill (which can hardly be seen at all from Kingswells). The extension of the Fan Zone onto the open area outwith the stadium is very concerning in terms of the potential to create additional noise and disturbance across the local area. This would be particularly the case if audio-visual or live performances were held outwith the confines of the stadium. For commercial reasons, AFC wants to attract fans into this area for as long as possible before and after matches, thus extending the potential for noise generation over a longer period. AFC has not explained how noise from the Fan Zone would be mitigated.

The impact of noise from the practice pitches on neighbouring properties is being played down by AFC. The noise generated by ball impacts and players and trainers shouting will be of quite a different type from the current road traffic noise – less continuous but more irritating. On the edge of Kingswells, we can hear football games happening in Northfield, over 1.5 miles away. If several of the practice pitches at Kingsford are used concurrently, the noise impact on local residences will be unacceptable.

What provision is being made for noise control at non-football events held at Kingsford (eg. rock concerts) ? Such events have the potential to create major overspill of noise into neighbouring communities.

AFC says that 22% of fans currently walk to Pittodrie from within Aberdeen. For an average match attendance this equates to 2860 fans. These same fans will now have to travel to Kingsford by car or bus. The increased carbon footprint and loss of health benefits from walking are obvious.

In terms of biodiversity on the site, we accept that negative impacts would be small, and that some benefits to biodiversity could actually result from the landscape plantings proposed.

### **Dire Predictions about AFC's Future**

KCC is not convinced by AFC's use of emotive language about its "bleak" future if it cannot move on from a potential "museum scenario" at Pittodrie. In recent years, the Dons have shown themselves to be a highly successful championship team. We do not believe that Pittodrie cannot be improved in stages, or a new stadium accommodated at Loirston. There is no convincing evidence whatsoever that the co-location of training facilities with a stadium is necessary for a football team's success. AFC has clear financial motives in wanting to sell off the site at Pittodrie for housing.

AFC is concerned that attendances at matches could decline if it doesn't move from Pittodrie. However, having to travel 6-7 miles out of town for home games at Kingsford could prove just as much of a disincentive for some fans.

### **Socio-Economic Impacts**

In its Supplementary Information, AFC claims that the stadium will "*provide economic impact through the development of community pride and image*". Given the very large number of objections submitted by people in Westhill and Kingswells it is difficult to see how this aim will be achieved. Indeed, AFC has failed to spell out in any detail how the communities of Kingswells and Westhill (which have the most to lose in terms of quality of life) will actually benefit from this development.

To mitigate impacts on the local area, AFC promises to undertake a full engagement with communities and businesses "*post planning*". Why did AFC not undertake this kind of engagement *before* its plans were finalised ? This might have improved public relations with the local communities.

In its Supplementary Information AFC admits that it is unable to quantify potential effects on the level of crime from the greatly increased volume of people descending on the area on match days. AFC says it will "*be responsible for helping to limit any impacts of anti-social behaviour upon local communities*". However, no detail has been provided on how this will be achieved. This is a very different area to monitor compared to central Aberdeen and around Pittodrie. AFC should be responsible for providing sufficient CCTV cameras at key points in the surrounding area, including

Arnhall, Kingswells park-and-ride and Westhill shops. AFC should also fund the additional staffing needed to monitor footage from these cameras.

AFC has provided a bewildering set of statistics purporting to show that the economy of central Aberdeen won't suffer as a result of the move from Pittodrie to Kingsford. Much of this evidence will have been put together by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. AGCC has close and long-standing connections with AFC so cannot be regarded as an independent provider of evidence. The socio-economic statistics are clearly intended to support the Kingsford project and cannot be accepted as unequivocal. The statistical evidence provided by AFC requires a thorough and impartial analysis by ACC.

KCC is not convinced that the economy of central Aberdeen and the area around Pittodrie won't suffer. Fan-generated employment and income will shift from areas of deprivation to the high-employment and high-earnings areas of Westhill and Kingswells. Retail and hospitality in these out-of-town areas are bound to benefit at the expense of poorer areas of the City. Local businesses in Aberdeenshire could benefit at Aberdeen's expense. This "economic shift" would apply even more if non-football events are held at Kingsford instead of Pittodrie. The expanded Fan Zone at Kingsford will benefit AFC financially but draw away potential business from the wider community.

In terms of creating new employment, AFC admits in its Supplementary Information that Kingsford would create few, if any, additional jobs on operation. It states that "*The scale of the development is not significant enough to have a major impact in the regional economic /constructive labour market*".

AFC claims that building stadiums elsewhere has elevated local house values. Whilst this may have happened in relatively poor inner city areas in need of revitalization it is highly unlikely to happen in a semi-rural middle-class area like Westhill !

The Aberdeen FC Community Trust would move its base to Kingsford. However, AFCCT is essentially an outreach facility. Basing it 7 miles outside Aberdeen would provide few advantages. AFCCT has the greatest positive impact in areas of relative deprivation, poor health and low participation in sport. Basing AFCCT in a relatively wealthy area would reduce its impact and disadvantage those children and adults who need it most.

WHEN EVERYTHING IS WEIGHED UP, WE DO NOT SEE ANY NET SOCIO-ECONOMIC GAIN FOR THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY. IN FINANCIAL TERMS, THE MAIN BENEFICIARY WILL BE ABERDEEN FOOTBALL CLUB.

## **TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT**

### **Scope of the TA**

Plans for a large retail development on the A944 at Kingswells have been shelved, at least temporarily. The TA provided by AFC was based on this development going ahead. Has sufficient consideration been given to the different traffic patterns that will result if we revert to an office development on this site ?

The TA does not take account of large non-football events being held at Kingsford. At such events, cars are likely to be the main form of transport. How will traffic and parking be managed effectively at these events ?

## **Car Parking**

KCC has real concerns about the use of the information in the recent fan survey dated March 2017. The survey does nothing to clarify the modes of transport that will be used to attend matches at Kingsford. All the questions refer to travel to Pittodrie.

It is unclear how the figures in Table 2-5: Car Party Size for Travel to Pittodrie — 2017 AGCC Survey were produced for 7 party sizes when the result shown in Appendix A group the information into 5 party sizes. The results are further confused by the inclusion of people in the party whose destination was not the football stadium.

KCC remains unconvinced that people travelling to Pittodrie by car travel, on average, in groups of 2.9 people per vehicle. Other national surveys show much lower figures nearer 1.6. Consequently, the number of vehicles travelling to the stadium is understated, and the TA is invalid.

The survey considers where fans park in relation to the stadium and shows that 61% park within a 30 minute walk of Pittodrie. Fans are shown to park in surrounding streets and public/private car parks - basically anywhere they can. KCC is very concerned that streets in Kingswells within a 20 minute walk of the park-and-ride will be targeted for rogue parking. This will happen if fans find the park-and-ride is full or they aren't prepared to queue up to exit it after a match.

Use of off-site carparks at Arnhall for mid-week games will be problematic when the downturn in the oil industry is over and demand for evening parking by the offices returns.

## **Exit Strategy**

We are not convinced that an outdoor Fan Zone will be effective at extending fans' arrival/departure times, especially in bad weather. For mid-week games people will want to get home as quickly as possible. We do not accept that only non-car modes of transport want to leave within 40 minutes as stated in paragraph 4.2.3. Off-site cars cannot be held back and drivers will want to leave as soon as possible after a match.

The exit strategy from the stadium shows that most people want to leave as quickly as possible, but the strategy for people using the Kingswells park-and-ride is much slower. KCC is concerned that the exit strategy from here is unrealistic and many fans will prefer to walk along the core path/cycleway beside the A944 rather than wait for a shuttle bus. This remains a dangerous prospect as there are no plans to make this a safe walking route for large groups of people.

## **Pedestrians Crossing the A944**

KCC remains concerned about the number of pedestrians crossing the A944.

Tweaking signal timings to give 30 seconds of pedestrian crossing times every 2 minutes and then calculating crossing times that assume fans will cross the road 6 abreast and walk at 1m/s seems to be very precise, and only just fits within the signal timings. These calculations do not include for any contingency. Funneling pedestrians who are crossing the road 6 abreast onto a 3m wide footpath will cause delays. Adequate collecting and dispersal points on each side of the road would be required.

Effectively stopping traffic on an "A" road to allow pedestrians to cross adds to the frustration that non-football road users will experience. After being held up, when traffic starts moving, road users

will then be expected to sit in peak-time congestion. No matter how infrequently this may occur it will be a major inconvenience to non-football traffic.

AFC claims in paragraph 4.3.28 that their transport strategy “*will provide the safest crossing opportunity for supporters with minimal impact on traffic flow*”. KCC disagrees. Providing proper infrastructure in the form of a high-capacity overbridge or underpass is actually safer and will have no impact on traffic.

### **Junction Assessment**

KCC is happy for ACC to assess the junctions, but notes that there seem to be two methods to perform that assessment. KCC requests that the assessment satisfies both ACC’s and Transport Scotland’s criteria.

### **Road Modifications**

As the main beneficiaries of this development will be Aberdeen Football Club, they and not taxpayers should bear the cost of any modifications required to the A944, including safe crossing points and its junction with the AWPR.

IN SUMMARY, KINGSWELLS COMMUNITY COUNCIL STILL HAS MAJOR CONCERNS ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT. THE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION AND TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT HAVE NOT COVERED KEY ISSUES AND THERE ARE TOO MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS. THE APPLICATION SHOULD BE TURNED DOWN.
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### **Addendum**

We note that ACC has asked for further information. KCC reserves the right to make comment on any additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Cox  
Secretary  
Kingswells Community Council