

7th March 2010

Strategic Director

Dear Mr Battersby,

The former Guest and Chrimes site and proposals for a new Community Stadium

You will be aware from previous correspondence that the Society is of the view that efforts should continue to be made to seek an accommodation with the present owners of the Millmoor football ground with a view to achieving its modernisation and re-use by Rotherham United F.C. Ltd.

The Society's standpoint is principally based on sustainable travel grounds and the economic sustainability of transforming Millmoor as compared with building an entirely new stadium.

The Society accepts that the recently announced option of the Guest & Chrimes site is an ideal location from a sustainable travel viewpoint. However, having noted the contents of Council Minute No: C199 of 3rd March 2010, the Society has a genuine concern for the future of the listed building on this site. To put it bluntly, the Society is concerned that the Council, having now purchased the site specifically with a view to making it available on a long lease to Rotherham United, is no longer in a position to view impartially the relative merits of alternative development options for the site.

Quite clearly the Local Planning Authority had explicit justification in 1986 for submitting the building for listing as of special architectural or historic interest. It has maintained this stance throughout the time that Evans of Leeds has owned it, presumably in the belief that particularly the office building fronting Don Street has the potential to be developed in a way that complements other Rotherham Renaissance developments planned or under way in the immediate vicinity.

It may well be the case that the Society is voicing concerns unnecessarily, and it would perhaps be of help if you would clarify certain aspects of the proposal. When Council Minute C199 refers to *'approval to acquire the remaining part of the Guest and Chrimes site from*

the owner/developer Evans of Leeds does this purely refer to the site originally owned by Tomkins Plc, or does Evans of Leeds also now own the former Gloystarne warehouse? This would seem to be a critical point from the Society's standpoint.

If the site under consideration is limited to the former, the Society would genuinely query whether it would even be possible to fit the Millmoor football ground 'footprint' on the site. Our expectation is that the site must include Gloystarne if only because the Chairman of Rotherham United has referred on a number of occasions to a requirement for a 12 acre site.

In this eventuality it is felt that there is scope for securing the retention of the Guest & Chrimes office building (and possibly more), and that it would lend itself to re-use for several purposes complementary to the community stadium such as riverside restaurant, club shop, function rooms etc. It is not unknown for football clubs to be successfully operated with listed buildings located within their stadium perimeter; Craven Cottage at Fulham is one that immediately springs to mind.

The Rotherham District Civic Society, and the Rotherham Heritage Association and other bodies would I am sure be concerned if the first real details of the proposal are received in the form of a consultation on an application for listed building consent to demolish the Guest & Chrimes building. Many of the Civic Society members are also Rotherham United supporters and are keen to see the Club progress under its new chairman, but we also believe that a fair balance must be struck between the needs of modernity and the preservation of the existing built environment.

Finally, the Society assumes that, in accordance with best practice, the Council will be budgeting for any necessary security measures to safeguard the listed building from the time it is acquired by the Council until its future use is decided upon as part of a comprehensive planning framework for the entire site.

Yours sincerely,