

**REPORT OF THE
POMPEY SUPPORTERS' TRUST
STADIUM SUB-GROUP
(LONG TERM STRATEGY)
TO THE POMPEY SUPPORTERS' TRUST BOARD**



10th JUNE 2016

**Part I - investigating Stadium relocation or remaining at Fratton and summarizing
sites previously considered**

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REPORT OF THE POMPEY SUPPORTERS' TRUST STADIUM SUB-GROUP (LONG TERM STRATEGY) TO THE PORTSMOUTH SUPPORTERS' TRUST BOARD

Part I - investigating Stadium relocation or remaining at Fratton and summarizing sites previously considered

1. Introduction

1.1 This report expresses the views of the Long Term Strategy Group of the Stadium Sub-Group on the issue of whether Portsmouth Football Club (PFC) should relocate the stadium to a new site or remain at Fratton Park. If this report is approved by the PST Board, it is understood it will in turn be forwarded to the PFC Board for its consideration.

1.2 The options for redevelopment of the stadium on the existing site will be the subject of a separate future report.

1.3 Following the open meeting of the Pompey Supporters' Trust (PST) on 14 March 2016, a Stadium Sub-Group was set up on 13 April 2016 which included a Long Term Strategy Group.

1.4 The Long Term Strategy Group met on 28 April 2016. It comprises 13 persons, covering a wide variety of professional backgrounds including town planners, engineers, architect, risk managers, teacher and GP. The members are: Steve Higgins (Chairman), Gary Buckner (Vice-Chairman), Andrew Smith (Minutes Secretary), Mike Allgrove, Dave Benneworth, Tony Camilleri, Barry Harmer, Andrew Harnor, David Maples, Nick Moore, Mike Saunders, Paul Simpson, and Alan Stillwell. The meeting was chaired on this occasion by Mike Saunders, architect and member of the PST Stadium Group. All members were present, except David Maples who gave his apologies.

1.5 The meeting comprised a presentation given by Barry Harmer and Mike Allgrove, as a basis for discussion, on the advantages and disadvantages of relocating from or staying at, Fratton Park. Both are town planners who worked for Portsmouth City Council (PCC) in senior positions, Barry from 1979 to his retirement in 2008 and Mike from 2002 to 2013. This was followed by a debate on the issues raised, and conclusions by the Group. The presentation, subsequent discussion, and conclusions are now described.

2. Advantages of Relocation

2.1 Relocating to another site would enable a new stadium to be designed as an integral whole and with fewer design constraints (although still subject to the constraints imposed by the site).

2.2 It would also maintain continuity of capacity and avoid any phasing issues, as any new stadium could be completed while Fratton Park remained operational.

2.3 Existing residents around Fratton Park would also have benefit of the removal of environmental problems of traffic congestion, on-street parking and general disturbance.

3. Disadvantages of Relocation

3.1 The obvious disadvantage of relocation is the difficulty of finding, within the most densely populated city outside the London Boroughs, a site that: is large enough for a new stadium (approximately 12 acres); is available for purchase by agreement; is in single or limited ownership; has reasonable ground conditions (e.g. not contaminated or having poor drainage); has an affordable commercial value; has adequate or good vehicular access and public transport; does not involve heavy infrastructure costs (e.g. highway improvements, re-provision of facilities); has some off-street parking; is not near residential areas; has an acceptable visual and nature conservation impact; has public acceptability; is consistent with current planning policies, in this case The Portsmouth Plan, adopted in January 2012; and is therefore likely to obtain planning permission.

3.2 Even if a site could be identified, any alternative location away from Fratton Park would face potential delay and uncertainty in the planning process, incurring substantial costs and with no guarantee of success.

4. Sites Previously Considered

4.1 There is almost a fifty year history of alternative sites explored by PCC and PFC.

4.2 Between 1969 and 1977 PCC considered the possibility of Fratton Park being relocated to a new stadium in Eastern Road on the site of **Portsmouth airport**, which closed in December 1973. At that time the Fratton Park was affected by PCC's preferred route for a new East-West road. However in view of the high construction cost, the fact that at that time PFC itself had no wish to move, and the dropping of the road scheme by Hampshire County Council (HCC) in 1976, the site was subsequently developed for mainly residential development ('Anchorage Park').

4.3 When Mr Gregory became Chairman of PFC in 1988, he sought to relocate Fratton Park to the west in part of **Fratton Goods Yard**. The site was supported by PCC planning policy, but PFC was unable to acquire the land from British Rail and the National Freight Corporation. This land, west of Fratton Way, was subsequently developed as The Pompey Centre.

4.4 In 1991 PFC made an informal proposal to PCC to move to **North Harbour allotments** in Southampton Road. Although the City Planning Officer thought the proposal had merit, PCC did not support the proposal, mainly as it required the demolition of houses. The site was subsequently developed for retail (Tesco) and business purposes.

4.5 Following the Hillsborough disaster in 1989 and the subsequent Taylor Report, PFC aspired to a new 25,000 all-seater stadium. In response to this, officers produced a detailed report ("Football - Fratton Park and the Future") to PCC in January 1992. As well as options for redeveloping the existing site, the report considered a number of sites and 'short-listed' four possible ones in addition to Fratton Goods Yard previously described.

4.6 The first was **King George V Playing Fields** in Cosham. This had the advantages of City Council ownership, good access, and was well served by public transport. However the two main disadvantages were the total loss of the existing sports ground, contrary to local plan policy and requiring re-provision by PFC of the football pitches, and a legal restriction on using the site for another purpose. There was also very strong public opposition, and objection from the Police because of potential crowd control problems in Cosham shopping centre. However the capacity of the road network would now be an issue.

4.7 The second site was **part of Portsmouth golf course fronting Dundas Lane** and Airport Service Road. This had good accessibility and was close to Hilsea Halt, but would lose four holes of the golf course, which would need to be re-provided by PFC on land owned by HCC on land known as Dundas Meadow. This land has since been developed as Admiral Lord Nelson School.

4.8 Thirdly, the report suggested **Hilsea Gasworks** site as a possible location. This site also had good access and was close to Hilsea Halt. It was also at that time available (subject to negotiation). However it was rather a 'backland' site, and had the benefit of planning permissions for industrial use. It has subsequently been developed for these purposes as 'Blueprint/Voyager Park'.

4.9 The final site was part of **Farlington Playing Fields and adjoining vacant land**, also owned by PCC. This was the site which PFC subsequently decided to pursue, submitting in April 1993 an application (the "Parkway" scheme) for outline planning permission for an all-seater football stadium, new railway station, retail development, and re-provision of pitches, with access from Eastern Road. In September PCC's Planning Committee agreed with the City Planning Officer's recommendation to refuse the application, but in October the full Council resolved to support the application. In December the application was called in by the Secretary of State (SoS) as a departure to the Local Plan, and a Public Local Inquiry held in May 1994. The application was finally refused by the SoS in December 1994 on the grounds of: adverse effect on nature conservation; no locational justification for retail; unsatisfactory vehicular access; and inadequate re-provision of pitches.

4.10 In 2006 PFC had aspirations for a 45-50,000 capacity stadium, and PCC officers looked informally at other possible sites. These included Tipner, the eastern end of the IBM site fronting Western Road in Cosham, and Rugby Camp Playing Fields.

4.11 **Tipner** was a high profile site, but at that time had no access to the M275, had poor access to public transport, was in a multiplicity of ownerships, heavily contaminated, and subject to extensive nature conservation issues. Since that time access from the motorway and a park and ride facility has been provided. The eastern part of the site now has outline planning permission for housing development, and the western part has the benefit of Central Government "City Deal" funding for development for housing and employment, including marine industries.

4.12 The **IBM** site was small and irregular in shape, was allocated for employment purposes, had poor public transport, vehicular access difficulties, and nature conservation issues. It now has planning permission, partly implemented, for 'campus style' office development, including car showrooms, hotel, and a private hospital.

4.13 **Rugby Camp Playing Fields** was a PCC owned “backland” site with limited access, close to residential, and involved the loss of playing pitches including those of Portsmouth Rugby Club. Part of the site has recently been developed by PFC as an extension to the Club’s training facilities at the Roko sports centre.

4.14 In 2007 PFC put forward an informal scheme for a stadium at **The Hard**, between Portsmouth Harbour Station and HMS Warrior. In August the Ministry of Defence objected on the ground the proposal would prejudice the operational capacity of the Naval Base, and the scheme was dropped.

4.15 In the same year PFC proposed a stadium at **Horsea Island**, including substantial amounts of retail as enabling development. This was not considered acceptable by PCC on the grounds of inappropriate location for retail, the extent of land contamination, and the issue of access to the M275. The scheme was not pursued.

4.16 No sites were considered outside of the city, although PCC’s 1992 report states that PFC considered Dunsbury Hill Farm and had preliminary discussions with Havant Borough Council. They were advised that planning permission was likely to be refused on Havant Gap policy grounds.

4.17 Other sites raised in discussion by the Group included land held by the Ministry of Defence at the **United Services Ground** in Burnaby Road and **HMS Temeraire Recreation Ground** in Park Road. The Ministry of Defence is unwilling to release these sites, which are well used, and protected open space (though not public). They would need to be combined to form a large enough site, and would raise traffic capacity problems. The University’s Langston Campus at **Furze Lane** was also considered, but this is again protected open space, with a particular nature conservation issue, and is not well located in access terms.

4.18 In conclusion, it is evident that both PFC and PCC have for many years extensively considered various sites for possible relocation of Fratton Park, but none have proved deliverable. Indeed all of these are sites now either already developed, committed, or allocated in the Local Plan, for other purposes. Effectively the only land that remains for possible consideration are the open space sites, where its loss and the associated nature conservation issue remain the prime obstacles.

5. Advantages of remaining at Fratton Park

5.1 PFC already owns the existing stadium and, as a result of the Tesco deal, adjoining land to the north (see attached plan of Fratton Park and Surrounding Land). As stated in the PFC letter supporting the Tesco development, this is the first time the Club has actually owned land additional to the actual stadium.

5.2 PCC considers that Fratton Park is the best site. The adopted Portsmouth Plan states that:

“The council believes the accessibility (in terms of the proximity to Fratton Railway Station with frequent train services to a variety of destinations, good bus routes and the number of residential units within walking and cycling distance) of Fratton Park means that it remains the most sustainable location for a football stadium”.

5.3 The Portsmouth Plan therefore has a specific policy (PCS7), which safeguards Fratton Park for use as a football stadium, and is designed to allow its future redevelopment. The policy and associated text is attached as Appendix 2 in this report. The policy states that:

“Fratton Park and the surrounding land (including the south side of Rodney Road) is allocated for a new or improved football stadium with enhanced facilities”.

5.4 It should be noted that the area subject of the policy includes considerable additional land outside the existing ownership of PFC. The extent of the land included in the policy is also shown in the attached plan (Appendix 1 of this report). Clearly the Tesco development has taken much of this land, but there remains a significant amount of land north of PFC’s ownership which could be developed, if acquired, to allow the redevelopment of the stadium and any associated enabling development right up to the frontage to Rodney Road. Interestingly, much of the land is in PCC ownership, though subject to leases. This is also shown in the plan. It is understood that one of the leases may currently be available for purchase by agreement, and its acquisition, depending on its location, would further PFC’s land holding.

5.5 Although this additional land is currently not in the Club’s ownership, the policy also states that: “The council is also prepared to use compulsory purchase powers if necessary”. This would require an approved scheme demonstrating the need for the land and PFC having the finances to cover the acquisition.

5.6 The policy accordingly gives significant potential for the redevelopment of Fratton Park. The policy refers to previous planning permissions demonstrating that a 35,000 capacity stadium is possible in this location, though the Tesco development may have reduced this. However the PFC letter supporting the Tesco scheme says that it would still enable an overall capacity of about 30,000.

5.7 The policy does, however, require the overall site to include the provision of office and/or industrial space to provide employment, and states that the benefits of any possible supporting development comprising entertainment, retail and leisure uses would need to be weighed against the impact on nearby designated centres. Moreover green travel measures would need to be put in place to accompany an improved stadium.

5.8 The planning policy for the existing site is therefore very strong and positive. It provides substantial potential to redevelop Fratton Park, as well as the presumption of planning permission being granted, subject to compliance with its requirements, which are not onerous.

5.9 As well as meeting planning policy, remaining at Fratton Park would also have the benefits of a general public acceptance (having been there 118 years already) and the retention of its historic site.

6. Disadvantages of remaining at Fratton Park

6.1 The main constraints to redeveloping Fratton Park are: the proximity of residential properties to the South Stand (Carisbrooke Road) and to the Milton End (Alverstone Road); the Tesco development; and the electricity sub-station and its associated high voltage cables. However these are all considered capable of resolution.

6.2 The rebuilding of the stadium while it is still in operation makes it more difficult to maintain capacity, but again this is capable of being overcome through careful phasing of development.

7. Conclusions

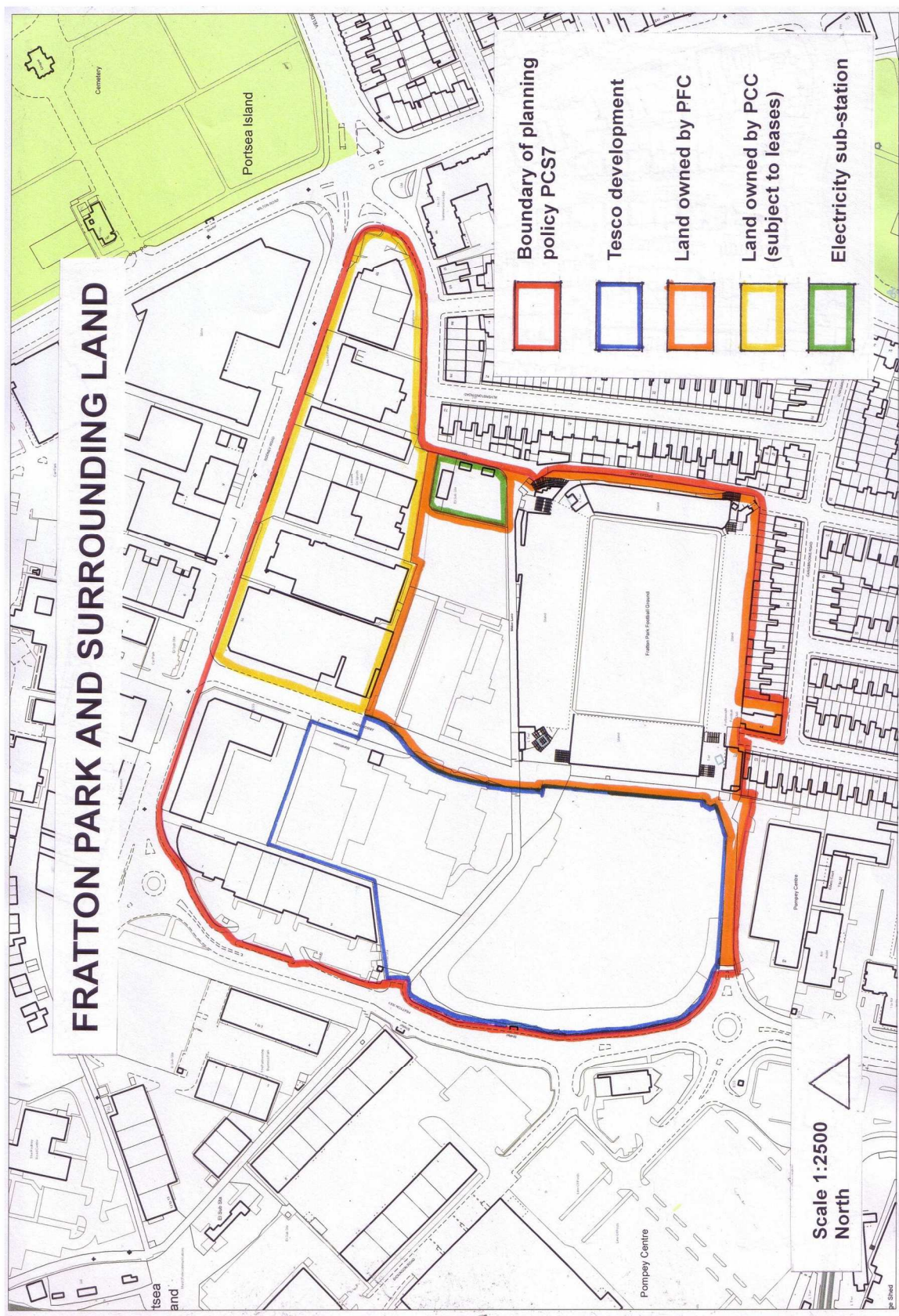
7.1 The following conclusions were **unanimously agreed** by all those present:

- Despite numerous attempts over many years to identify an alternative relocation site, none appears available or deliverable.
- The Council considers Fratton Park to be the best location, and has provided a strong and proactive planning policy to support this view.
- Although there are constraints, PFC has sufficient land within its control to achieve a significantly improved stadium at Fratton Park.
- PFC should seek to extend its current ownership by acquiring the industrial units on the south side of Rodney Road, particularly if one is currently available for purchase by agreement and is in a strategic location. This would give more flexibility for stadium development, including the opportunity for enabling development that would complement and help finance it.

This document has been approved by all members of the Pompey Supporters' Trust Stadium Sub-Group (Long Term Strategy).

Appendix 1 – Site Plan of Fratton Park planning policy area

[OS Promap licence no. 100020448]



Appendix 2 – Extract from the Adopted Portsmouth Plan [sheet 1]

APPENDIX: POLICY PCS7 AND ASSOCIATED TEXT

(NB for map 12 referred to in paragraph 3.94 of policy text, showing boundary of the planning policy, see plan of Fratton Park and Surrounding Land)

Fratton Park & the south side of Rodney Road

- 3.94 Fratton Park, the home of Portsmouth Football Club, is located close to Fratton Railway Station and district centre and is surrounded by existing employment and residential areas (see map 12).
- 3.95 Fratton Park itself is a 20,688 capacity all seater football stadium, with land immediately to the west currently used as a surface level car park. Rodney Road is immediately north of Fratton Park and comprises a mixture of commercial premises.
- 3.96 There has been a long and varied history to the redevelopment of Fratton Park and the surrounding land. The football club has explored numerous options to increase the capacity of the stadium, including the possibility of relocating to another part of the city.
- 3.97 The council believes the accessibility (in terms of the proximity to Fratton Railway Station with frequent train services to a variety of destinations, good bus routes and the number of residential units within walking and cycling distance) of Fratton Park means that it remains the most sustainable location for a football stadium.

The Portsmouth Plan approach to Fratton Park & the south side of Rodney Road

- 3.98 Fratton Park will be safeguarded for use as a football stadium with the possibility for an improved or new stadium. An enhanced stadium at Fratton Park could act as a trigger for the regeneration of the surrounding commercial areas. However, development opportunities of the surrounding land should not prejudice the aspiration of an improved and enlarged football stadium. It will be necessary to consider the benefits of any supporting development comprising entertainment, retail and leisure uses, against the impact on nearby designated centres.

Development Requirements

- 3.99 Access to the Fratton Railway Station will need to be improved to accommodate the large numbers of people attending events at the enlarged stadium. Any application will have to be accompanied by a Green Travel Plan and demonstrate that the highway network could accommodate the development. Previous planning permissions granted to redevelop Fratton Park have demonstrated that a 35,000 capacity stadium is possible in this location provided green travel measures are put in place.

Appendix 2 – Extract from the Adopted Portsmouth Plan [sheet 2]

PCS7 Fratton Park & the south side of Rodney Road

Fratton Park and the surrounding land (including the south side of Rodney Road) is allocated for a new or improved football stadium with enhanced facilities. Any proposal should include:

- A new football stadium with a capacity up to 35,000; and
- The provision of at least 12,000m² of B1 and/or B2 employment space.

Any development will have to be designed to be cycle and pedestrian friendly and will have to ensure improved links to and capacity at Fratton Railway Station.

Development may need to be phased in order to ensure the provision of necessary infrastructure, including access improvements.

The city council's preference is for comprehensive redevelopment, however, if individual sites were to come forward separately then any planning application would have to clearly demonstrate (including an indicative masterplan) how it would help to facilitate and not prejudice the ability of Portsmouth Football Club to provide a new/improved stadium and would ensure the co-ordinated development of the area.

Implementation, delivery and monitoring

- 3.100 This policy will be implemented through development management decisions and infrastructure will be provided as part of the development. The council is also prepared to use compulsory purchase powers if necessary, in circumstances where the promoter of the development has secured adequate funding to support the compulsory purchase.
- 3.101 Previous permissions have demonstrated that it is feasible to accommodate a 35,000 seater stadium through a reconfiguration of the site provided that transport infrastructure of improvements at the railway station, improved links to the station and a green travel plan in place.
- 3.102 The council will work with the football club to achieve a solution to the ongoing aspirations of the club for an improved stadium.

monitoring framework for PCS7 Fratton Park & the south side of Rodney Road

Policy Outcomes	Key Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To ensure a site is maintained in the city for redeveloping the home of Portsmouth Football Club and providing new facilities ▪ Regeneration of Fratton Park & the south side of Rodney Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress towards delivery of the site (information on funding for the stadium, provision of employment space, transport improvements and progress of any planning applications).

where else to look

- Planning permission for the redevelopment of Fratton Park & Pompey Village - A*38655/AA