

Bushey Against Watford Stadium

Gino Pozzo
Watford FC
Vicarage Road
Watford
WD18 0ER

% Cllr Paul Richards
Civic Offices
Elstree Way
WD6 1WA

24th July 2020

Dear Mr Pozzo,

Proposed Watford FC move to Bushey

We write to express our deepest concern at the prospect of Watford FC building a new stadium in north Bushey - and specifically, on the site of Bushey Hall Golf Club.

We implore you, as the club's owner, to abandon these plans. Please save Bushey from a disastrous project which would cause irreparable harm, both to our community and our local environment.

In writing this letter, we come together on behalf of a wide range of groups and organisations within north Bushey and the surrounding community. While our backgrounds vary, we share a profound commitment to the wellbeing of our neighbourhoods, residents, and greenspace. And we are united in opposition to this stadium scheme.

Within Bushey, there has been near-universal objection to the proposal ever since your designs for a Bushey stadium first entered the public domain, when they were published by the *Watford Observer* on 5th March. By June, you had commissioned a presentational video for the project, outlining the club's vision in more detail. This involves concreting over the golf course (a greenfield site), and building not only a major football stadium, but also a hotel and cinema.

On 10th June, this video was shown to Hertsmere Borough Council's Operations Review Committee by Cllr Paul Morris, the then executive portfolio holder for Community and Economic Development. The committee heard that the club proposed a £250 million development which would require 1,800 matchday staff.

A week later, the *Watford Observer* disclosed that your representatives had begun official talks with Hertsmere Borough Council, and that Bushey Hall Golf Course appeared to meet most of your criteria for the site of a new stadium.

It is now clear that you are taking this idea very seriously. And that has caused immense dismay and distress among Bushey residents, who are, quite frankly, horrified by the prospect of having a major football stadium on their doorstep.

We must stress that, in every other respect, we have nothing but goodwill towards Watford FC. The club is a great source of pride in our part of the world. Many of us in Bushey are lifelong supporters. We wish you success, both on and off the pitch. But Watford FC belongs in *Watford*. It emphatically does *not* belong here in Bushey.

Watford and Bushey are close and friendly neighbours. In Bushey we greatly value the relationship between our two communities. Nevertheless we continue to be wholly distinct and separate places. We each have our own heritage, landscape, and character. Watford is bustling and cosmopolitan. Bushey is gentler, quieter, and greener. We like it that way, and we will strive to keep it that way.

Please listen to us when we say that Bushey is an incredibly unsuitable place to build a Premiership football stadium. Even on a basic level, we lack the infrastructure required to absorb the traffic and footfall. We could not cope with the congestion that matchdays would bring. The addition of the hotel and cinema only exacerbates these problems. And in environmental terms, we will never accept the destruction of an irreplaceable greenbelt site - either on the golf course (a wildlife habitat and home to century-old oaks) or anywhere else in Bushey.

On a deeper level, the physical reality of a football stadium would forever change the essential character of Bushey. The noise, the crowds, the impact on the skyline - all of these are utterly alien to our local culture and landscape, and would be especially disruptive for the many hundreds of households who live within a few yards of the site.

It's true that, so far, this is only a proposal. But the further you pursue it, the more damage is caused. The speculation creates uncertainty which may affect property prices and jeopardise local businesses. So we urge you to now bring that speculation to an end.

You have every right to be ambitious for Watford FC. We totally understand why you seek to expand and modernise your stadium capacity. But it is not Bushey's responsibility to enable this. We all wish to see the club flourish, but our community cannot make drastic sacrifices simply to fulfil your commercial aims.

We beseech you to look elsewhere. There are many other options available to you, including upgrading your present site or moving to a genuinely suitable new location. We appreciate the scale of your challenge. But however difficult your problem, Bushey is not the solution.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Beney, local environmental campaigner
Alison Castelow, Mill Way and Mead Way Community Groups
Jane Cook, Highwood Women's Group
Lawrence Davis, former councillor for Bushey North, Conservative Party
Ian Douglas, Friends of Bushey Rose Garden
Beverley Dyer, Friends of Highwood
Rabbi Elchonon Feldman, Bushey United Synagogue
Panos Fellas, Mill Way Area News
Gillian Gray, Bushey Manor Field Trust
Owen Harvey, North Bushey Baptist Church
John Humphries, Hertsmere Green Party
Murray Lee, Kemp Place Residents Association
Chris Meiers, Friends of Fishers Field
Debbie Naylor, Royal Connaught Park Residents' Association
Nik Oakley, Bushey (Hertsmere) Labour
Cllr Paul Richards, Bushey Liberal Democrats
Barry Shooter, Bushey Interfaith Forum
Paul Williamson, Bushey Mill Royal British Legion Club