

**PLANNING FOR SPORT: STADIA DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN
REGENERATION – CASE STUDIES OF ENGLISH FOOTBALL
LEAGUE CLUBS**



This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of MSc in
Spatial Planning.

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Declaration of individual authorship

I affirm that this dissertation contains no acknowledged work or ideas from any publication or written work by another student or any other person.

Statement of Ethics Review Approval

This dissertation involved human participants. A Form E1, showing ethics review approval has been attached to this dissertation in Appendix A.

Abstract

The UK has been experiencing urban decline since the collapse of the manufacturing and industrial sector which start to occur in the 1970s. This has given rise to a plethora of environmental, social, and economic problems in urban centres. In response, the UK government has utilised ‘urban regeneration’ approaches to tackle the problems happening in post-industrial centres. In the 1990s, football clubs were having to respond to the findings of the Taylor Report, which introduced new safety regulations and deemed many existing stadia unsafe. Prior to this, sport and planning were very separate, but this began to change as stadiums were moving away from centres and being built on peripheral land associated with cheaper land costs. However, this trend is being reversed as sports and planning have become even closer as ‘stadia-led regeneration’ is being used to reinvigorate towns and cities across the country. The current research focuses on English Premier League clubs and their stadia, and so this study will focus on three English Football League clubs; AFC Wimbledon, Brentford FC, and Luton Town FC. Through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of planning documents in the public domain, this research project has accumulated data addressing the research gap surrounding stadia development and urban regeneration and investigates the differences in scale. The conclusions from this study support existing literature and the trends identified, whilst also addressing a research gap and builds on existing theories in this area of study.

Key Words

Regeneration, Football, Stadiums, Place, Planning,

Word Count

15,911 words

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Chapter 1 – Stadium-led regeneration: A response to urban decline

1.1 Contextualisation of Research

1.1.1 The emergence of urban regeneration

Since the 1970s, the UK government has had to deal with the vacuum left by the collapse of the manufacturing and industrial sector within urban centres, which has led to a plethora of environmental, social, and economic problems characterised by the increased number of redundant buildings, unemployment, and unused land (Lees & Melhuish, 2015). As such, successive British governments since have utilised slightly differing terminology and buzzwords to underline their approach in tackling the problems emanating from the decline of the post-industrial city centres (Lee, 2003, p. 67).

This has given rise to the ‘urban regeneration’ process which is regarded as one of the most effective tools for solving the wide range of urban problems which exist today through the creation of sustainable, long-lasting solutions for the social, environmental, economic, and physical concerns existing in cities (Boyle *et al.*, 2018). Urban regeneration initiatives look to improve social, economic, and physical conditions through interventions such as contributing to housing supply, the built environment, and other local amenities, alongside investment into transportation and other infrastructure (Albanese *et al.*, 2019). Urban regeneration is the latest inception from the long list of numerous buzzwords and phrases used in literature and the media which characterises the processes and outcomes mentioned above; adding to the previously used urban revitalisation, renewal, and renaissance. Lees (2003) explores the subtleties in the use of these phrases between academics and policy makers over time, alluding to the 1960s/1970s discourse of urban renewal which focused on large-scale, public sector-driven redevelopments within inner city areas. Lees (2003) then outlines the shift to urban regeneration in the 1980s which used public funds to help deliver economic growth, as expressed through the London Docklands development (Brownill, 1999), and then the urban renaissance approach adopted by New Labour in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Tallon, 2010). Nowadays, current planning policies look for a public-private sector partnership with a sharp focus on sustainability to help achieve urban regeneration (Hall, 2006). As such, urban regeneration is the most widely-used term concerning current development strategies (Tallon, 2010).

Before starting to explore this term further, it is imperative to define what urban regeneration means and what it encompasses. On its most fundamental level, the RPTI defines regeneration as a holistic process which reverses economic, social, and physical decline in places where market forces alone will not suffice (RTPI, 2019). More specifically, ‘urban’ regeneration is associated with any processes of this kind occurring within towns and cities (Tallon, 2010). In this paper, the term will be further unpicked according to Turok’s (2005, p.57) definition, which identifies three distinctive features:

1. Changing the nature of a place by involving the community and other actors with a stake in its future.
2. Embracing multiple objectives that cut across the main functional responsibilities of central government, situational to the context of different areas.
3. Involve co-operation and partnership amongst different stakeholders across multiple levels.

Turok’s (2005) definition is underpinned by the exemplification of people, business, and place. It posits that urban regeneration forms a significant part of the wider urban policy that looks to enhance skills, capacities, and aspirations, which will enable people to participate and benefit from regeneration strategies, like improving economic competitiveness with local jobs and business prosperity. More holistically, urban regeneration aims to improve the general appeal of a place, which in turn will attract both people and business. Urban areas are complex; underpinned by economic, social, physical, and environmental transitions, and urban regeneration strategies are deemed the best response to allowing the successful prosperity of towns and cities and are therefore being pursued by government structures across different levels (Roberts, 2000). Turok’s (2005) definition indicates that the balanced combination of all three elements will help secure the upward trajectory of an area in a long-term, sustainable manner. In recent years, it has become more common that these improvements are increasingly facilitated through stadium developments (Tallon, 2010).

1.1.2 Football stadia: A strategy for sports-led regeneration

Sport was a separate entity to planning, but now it is an important contributor to regeneration objectives (Hall, 2004). Sport is a key proponent of contemporary culture and has had an increasingly important role in facilitating urban regeneration since the 1990s (Short & Kim, 1999). Prior to this point, sport was rarely considered as a tool for economic, social, or

environmental development, and it wasn't until the 1990s that sport was used for regeneration purposes in major cities across Europe (Davies, 2006). These approaches vary from the construction of major stadia for sporting events to smaller-scale community facilities. In either case; it is expected that sports-related infrastructure additions in urban areas would reinvigorate declining areas. In the UK, this has habitually taken the form of the development of new stadia being constructed to regenerate declining urban areas under the umbrella term of urban regeneration (Smith, 2007)

As such, the role of sport has shifted from being merely an active leisure pastime to becoming a key social and economic component in helping to address issues such as social inequality, deprivation, and regeneration (Davies, 2005; Davies, 2002). Herring (2004) sees sport as a “central strategy for cities to promote their image and global position, undertake regeneration, and tackle the problems of social exclusion” (p. 17). In recent years, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in the UK have introduced sports-led regeneration policies to facilitate the revitalisation of urban areas (Davies, 2008). Specifically, an increasing number of LPAs are using stadia developments as a catalyst for urban regeneration. The reasons why stadia-led developments have become more prominent over the last thirty years are twofold; the first is constructing new stadia to host major sporting events. Some examples from the UK include the 1991 World Student Games in Sheffield (Gratton *et al.*, 2005), the 1999 Rugby World Cup (Wise & Whittam, 2015), the 2002 Commonwealth Games (Smith & Fox, 2007), and the 2012 London Olympics (Watt, 2013). Secondly, a vast number of towns and cities in the UK have built new stadia in response to the publication of the Taylor Report (Taylor, 1990) and the new safety requirements needed for stadiums following the Hillsborough disaster. This has resulted in many football clubs having to either upgrade their existing stadia facilities or move entirely to a new location. Table 1 illustrates the number of clubs in the top 4 tiers of English Football who have relocated to new stadiums in response to these requirements and have been opened at the time of writing.

Table 1: Football Clubs who have relocated to new stadiums since 1990.

Club	League	Stadium name (as per sponsorship reasons)	Opened	Capacity
Arsenal	Premier League	Emirates Stadium	2006	60,704

Brighton & Hove Albion	Premier League	The American Express Community Stadium	2011	30,666
Leicester City	Premier League	King Power Stadium	2002	32,312
Manchester City	Premier League	Etihad Stadium	2003	55,097
Southampton	Premier League	St. Mary's Stadium	2001	32,384
Tottenham Hotspur	Premier League	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	2019	62,062
West Ham United	Premier League	The London Stadium	2016	66,000
Cardiff City	EFL Championship	Cardiff City Stadium	2009	33,280
Derby County	EFL Championship	Pride Park	1997	33,597
Huddersfield Town	EFL Championship	John Smith's Stadium	1994	24,121
Hull City	EFL Championship	KC Stadium	2002	25,586
Middlesbrough	EFL Championship	The Riverside	1995	34,742
Millwall	EFL Championship	The New Den	1993	20,146
Reading	EFL Championship	The Madejski Stadium	1998	24,161
Stoke City	EFL Championship	Bet365 Stadium	1997	30,089
Swansea City	EFL Championship	Liberty Stadium	2005	21,088
Bolton Wanderers	EFL League 1	University of Bolton Stadium	1997	28,723

Coventry City	EFL League 1	Ricoh Arena	2005	32,609
Doncaster Rovers	EFL League 1	Keepmoat Stadium	2007	15,231
MK Dons	EFL League 1	Stadium:MK	2007	30,500
Oxford United	EFL League 1	Kassam Stadium	2001	12,500
Rotherham United	EFL League 1	New York Stadium	2012	12,021
Shrewsbury Town	EFL league 1	Montgomery Waters Meadow	2007	9,875
Sunderland	EFL League 1	Stadium of Light	1997	49,000
Walsall	EFL League 1	Bescot Stadium	1990	11,300
Wycombe Wanderers	EFL League 1	Adams Park	1990	10,137
Colchester United	EFL League 2	Colchester Community Stadium	2008	10,105
Morecambe	EFL League 2	The Globe Arena	2010	6,476
England National Football Team	International	Wembley	2007	90,000

(Source: *footballgroundguide.com*, 2019)

Sports stadia form a key part of the urban infrastructure (Humphreys, 2019). They are iconic spaces and play an important role in destination promotion and other policy objectives within the urban fabric. The development of football stadiums has been increasingly used as catalysts for urban regeneration as the mass interest in football is capitalised on by key stakeholders (Stevens & Wootton, 1997; Williams, 1997). Many cities across the world have made considerable efforts to build new sports stadia; in the USA, there has been a ‘stadium-mania’

to capitalise on popular culture and attract a professional sports team that would provide big city status through their franchise-based system (Thornley, 2002). The UK differs, as stadia have been employed to regenerate declining inner city and city centre areas, with the absence of a footloose, franchise system such as the one in the USA means that sports teams rarely locate to another area so frequently (*ibid.*).

Despite the plethora of football clubs relocating to new stadium locations in response to the Taylor Report, only a handful of football clubs have directly incorporated wider regeneration initiatives to be implemented alongside the construction of the new stadium (Fletcher & Sharp, 2012). Whilst many, if not all, planning applications relating to stadia include ancillary facilities associated with the development such as transport improvements and commercial spaces such as club shops, there are only a few which include provisions for housing, separate office and retail space, and other infrastructure improvements separate to the stadium itself. The clubs who have facilitated this tend to be from the English Premier League (EPL), where money and financial capital is plentiful.

1.2 Academic Contextualisation of Research

As a result, most of the academic research relating to wider stadia-led regeneration schemes in the UK has focused on the same handful of case studies from the EPL and the England National team, the teams dominating mobilised research are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Existing academic focus.

Football Club/Team	Stadium	Academic Research
Arsenal FC	Emirates Stadium	Ahlfeldt & Kavetsos (2014); Walters (2011); Church & Penny (2013)
Manchester City	Etihad Stadium	Thornley (2002); Hall (2004); Jones (2002)
Tottenham Hotspur	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Panton & Walters (2018); Dillon & Fanning (2018); Panton & Walters (2019)
West Ham United	London Stadium	Gold & Gold (2008); Watt (2013); Evans (2014)

England National Team	Wembley	Thornley (2002); Bulley (2002); Davies (2010); Smith (2012)
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(Source: Author, 2019)

In fact, excluding minor passing references in Bulley (2002), there is currently no research specifically dedicated to stadia-led regeneration initiatives in the UK looking at clubs from outside of the EPL; the only clubs investigated are the EPL clubs noted above and the England National Team at Wembley. This highlights a significant research gap which needs to be addressed. Moreover, a further similarity between these researched teams is the scale of development. All these case studies involve stadia which are designed to hold a capacity of 60,000+ spectators; there is currently no focus on wider regeneration strategies relating to football stadia which have a smaller capacity.

1.3 Project Rationale and Research Gap

There had been a paucity of research focusing on stadia-led regeneration schemes in the UK until an identifiable body of literature started to emerge at the turn of the millennium. Davies (2002; 2005; 2008) played a fundamental role in the emergence of this field and initially focused on the role of the stadium within the local economy and the property market before investigating how sports infrastructure could help deliver economic and social change through regeneration. Walters (2011), Smith (2005; 2007; 2012), and Panton (2017; (& Walters, 2019)) have also undertaken significant research into the contributions that sporting mega-events and large-scale EPL stadia have made towards regeneration objectives. Davies (2005) concluded that stadia developments do not reduce the value of residential property in the surrounding area but doesn't go as far to recognise impacts on other uses in town centre locations. Davies (2016) also raises concerns over the delivery of sports infrastructure, highlighting the need for such large-scale infrastructure to be integrated with the existing community. Lastly, Panton (2017) acknowledges that the power of football clubs can resist major changes to stadium-led regeneration plans (in the case of Tottenham Hotspur). However, it remains to be seen whether these power relations exist for clubs of lower financial ability and positioning.

As mentioned in Section 1.2, there has been considerable focus on stadium-led regeneration schemes from clubs within the EPL. This is largely unsurprising as the EPL is one of the most popular football leagues globally, with live matches aired in 188 territories bringing in a global audience of 3.2 billion viewers (EPL, 2019). The EPL is characterised by commodification,

transnational financial investment, and commercialisation (Platts & Smith, 2010), and the financial distance between the EPL and the English Football League (EFL) is increasing season-by-season through the influx of financial capital from broadcast revenue, foreign investment, and continental tournament prize earnings (Schreyer & Schmidt, 2018). As a result, this has led to the abundance of scholarly literature pertaining to many aspects of the EPL, especially large-scale stadia developments.

Whilst academic research into stadia-led regeneration schemes continues to grow, there is a dearth of literature on football clubs outside of the EPL. Consequently, the aim of this research project is to contribute to the existing literature surrounding stadia-led regeneration in the UK; specifically investigating the regenerative processes within three EFL football clubs; AFC Wimbledon, Brentford FC, and Luton Town FC. This paper looks to address the research gap in this growing field of study by exploring how football clubs outside of the EPL operate in terms of stadium proposals which do not match in spatial and financial terms to those that have occurred within the EPL.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

This study has three key aims and objectives, shown by Table 3:

Table 3: Aims and Objectives for this study.

1) To identify how EFL clubs approach new stadia developments and how they incorporate the wider locality, and trace whether these schemes are like that of EPL clubs.
2) To investigate how successful stadia-based, sports-led regeneration schemes are in revitalising areas through case studies in English football
3) To explore the role that planning plays in the delivery of new stadia and analyse the differences in scale relating to stadia developments in the EFL in comparison to the EPL

(Source: Author, 2019)

This chapter has traced the path of urban regeneration from its inception towards its key role within the UK planning system. It has also looked at how football stadia have emerged as an approach to facilitate urban regeneration following the Taylor Report (1990). The following chapter will review the current literature surrounding stadia-led regeneration schemes; looking at its evolution over time and integration into the planning system and evaluating its success with EPL clubs.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Stadia-led regeneration: A response to post-industrial decline

Over the last fifty years, the urban environment in the UK has experienced significant changes from post-industrial decline, affecting numerous towns and cities across the country (Davies, 2016). Prior to the 1990s, central government policy responses looking to combat this decline focused on urban regeneration schemes, and these strategies became key approaches to develop new urban opportunities (Wise & Whittam, 2015). Sports has begun to underpin an increasing number of regeneration initiatives; mainly through sporting events and the promotion of tourism, but new stadia developments are now becoming central to regeneration schemes and has led to a discernible stadia-led regeneration approach (Smith, 2012). Since the 1990s, it has emerged as an important subset of ‘regeneration’, and has helped contribute to urban initiatives (Coalter, 2007). More broadly, the approach and definition of sport began to change; it was not merely a “recreational activity that happen[s] to take place in cities”, but an institution that could be moulded by the elements of the urbanisation process (Reiss, 1989, p. 259). Thus, the process of stadia-led regeneration began to arise; facilitated through sporting events, infrastructure, and programmes (Tallon, 2013). This paper specifically focuses on the use of football stadia as a driver of urban regeneration, and this section will review the body of literature and outline key themes to form the basis of this research project and help reinforce the project rationale and uncover research gaps in the field.

The use of sport to generate wider benefits to society has now been recognised for over twenty years (Gratton and Henry, 2001; Coalter, 2007). Historically, sport was viewed as superfluous to combatting urban decline rather than a central approach (Pack and Glyptis, 1989). Furthermore, it was largely seen under the broader remit of culture-led regeneration, and not an independent approach (Bianchini & Schwengel, 1991; Jones and Evans, 2008). However, since the 1990s, sport has increasingly developed credibility as a contributor and driver of regeneration within the UK and in other nations (Davies, 2010). As such, there has been an emergence of literature highlighting the role of sports contributing to urban regeneration, with most literature drawing attention to the role of sporting ‘mega-events’ such as the World Cup and Olympic Games as the drivers of sports-led regeneration (ElGahani & Furlan, 2018). There is a lack of research that has investigated the relationship that stadia development has on regeneration objectives. Current literature is drawn towards examples critically analysing the economic impacts of large-scale stadia, whilst research into sporting mega-events planning

focuses on the effective integration and utilisation of sports venues that continuously serve the locality it is situated in (*ibid.*). Despite the perceived benefits of stadia-led regeneration and its increased use since the turn of the millennium, John Bale (1993, 2000) discusses the complexities surrounding broader sports-led regeneration approaches, specifically around sports teams, alluding to contentious issues relating to the uneven distribution of positive and negative effects within the city-space emanating from such strategies.

2.2 Defining ‘Stadia-led Regeneration’

The terms ‘*Stadia-led regeneration*’ and ‘*Stadium-led regeneration*’ are used interchangeably in policy documentation and academic literature and this paper will adopt a similar approach. The relocation and redevelopment of football stadia in the UK in response to the Taylor Report (1990) has led to stadia development playing a key role in the regeneration of urban communities (Bulley, 2002). There were three main reasons in response to this report for football clubs developing new stadia (*ibid*):

- Much existing stadia were in residential areas, leading to transport issues and limited expansion opportunities.
- All-seater requirements resulted in a greater footprint needed for seating (rather than standing).
- The sole use of a football match twice a month was increasingly viewed as a wasted opportunity. The rise of conferencing and banqueting in the 1990s could only work in stadiums which were appropriately designed.

Stadia-led regeneration emerged as a subset of urban regeneration strategies in the globalisation era, as towns and cities tried to make places more appealing to “work, live, shop, and recreate” (Balsas, 2004, p. 398). Key stakeholders began to realise the role in which stadia could have in transforming brownfield sites and unused areas (Bulley, 2002). It was also recognised stadiums helped create high-profiles for areas by encouraging holistically-designed social, economic, and environmental improvements to boost urban competitiveness and promote a place’s image (Ghahremani & Hashemi, 2018).

Most of the support pertaining to the stadium-led regeneration process is the financial benefits that football brings for the local economy which typically outweigh the costs incurred to get the project completed (Baade & Dye, 1990). The broad rationale of constructing new stadia is

normally clear; the club needs to meet the requirements of the Taylor Report and the football club needs capacity for expansion (both physically and financially). However, the planning rationale is not always as simple. Football stadiums forms a large part of the urban fabric, taking up huge swathes of land, and puts immense pressure on services and transport infrastructure on matchdays.

The relationship between the planning system and stadia development is based on two points; the planning system represents the policy constraints which football clubs must consider when designating the location of the stadium (Black & Lloyd, 1994). Football clubs inherently represent a certain place, and so football grounds must be conscious of their geographical position in relation to the area they represent, with the planning system directly influencing and determining where it is appropriate to develop. Secondly, the relocation will likely result in the abandonment of an existing stadium, and this gives rise to issues relating to actions needed to make this space useful again (*ibid.*). These two points highlight the importance of planning in these schemes.

2.3 Stadia development and UK Planning Policy

The interplay between sport and planning policy is most notably expressed in Section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), current Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and the superseded Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17).

Prior to the 1990s, sport and UK planning policy were deemed very separate entities. At the time, sports policy emphasised participation, performance, and the delivery of services for its implementation, whilst urban policy tackled urban development, regeneration, and deprivation (Davies, 2016). However, the relationship between sport and planning policy began to emerge towards the 1990s, expedited by the view that sport had a vital role to play in contributing to other societal agendas by John Major's Conservative government (Houlihan & Lindsay, 2013). This was initially seen in for the 1991 World Student Games in Sheffield, but has since spread throughout the UK with London and Manchester following suit (Davies, 2010). Since the 1990s, policy makers have recognised that sport can be used to address a range of issues relating to economic development, place boosterism, and place-marketing under the umbrella of urban regeneration. The use of sport for addressing regeneration objectives has been facilitated by the belief from central government that it can play a pivotal role in creating a whole range of economic, social, and environmental benefits to local people and communities through revitalising urban areas (Davies, 2010).

The NPPF is a material consideration within any planning application, with **Paragraph 7** stating that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions that are set out in **Paragraph 8**.

The discourse shift resulting in sports stadia being used as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of an area is underpinned by **Chapter 8 Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities**, with **Paragraph 92** addressing the need to provide social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services that communities need. In reference to sports venues, planning policies and decisions should:

- a. Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities, and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- b. Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social, and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
- c. Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- d. Ensure that established shops, facilities, and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
- e. Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses, and community facilities and services.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) suggests that Sport England's (SE) guidance is fundamental in assessing the needs for sports facilities, to the point where they are statutory consultees for sports-related planning applications. According to PPG *'Open space, sports, and recreational facilities, public rights of way, and local green space'*, LPAs are advised to consult SE in cases where:

- Loss of, or loss of use for sport, of any major sports facility;
- Proposals which lead to the loss of use for sport of a major body of water;
- Creation of a major sports facility;

- Creation of a site for one or more playing pitches;
- Development which creates opportunities for sport (such as the creation of a body of water bigger than two hectares following sand and gravel extraction);
- Artificial lighting of a major outdoor sports facility;
- A residential development for 300 dwellings or more

SEs guidance on stadia development and regeneration is most explicitly mentioned in their Issue 7 Planning Bulletin '*Stadia, Football Academies, and Centres of Excellence*' (March 2000), and the Issue 10 Planning Bulletin '*Sport and Regeneration*' (September 2001). Whilst heavily outdated, they are one of the few documents directly relating to sports stadia and regeneration. Issue 7 addresses how sports facilities enjoyed a boom worldwide and highlights the landmark reputation stadiums can create for an area. They are habitually viewed as one of the most recognisable features in many towns and cities across the world (whether a sports fan or not).

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise). Therefore, applications relating to sports stadia development are underpinned and considered by an area's local plan, with some authorities having specific policies within their local development plan and associated documents surrounding stadia development.

One example of this is in the London Borough of Haringey, where the Council have prepared the Tottenham Area Action Plan (AAP) Development Plan Document (DPD), which sets out planning guidelines and policies in place to support the long-term regeneration of the Tottenham area. Haringey's development plan consists of Strategic Policies, Development Management Policies, Site Allocations, the Tottenham AAP, and the London Plan, with the emerging Wood Green AAP and North London Waste Plan adding to this once adopted. Tottenham Hotspur Football Club (THFC) were initially granted planning permission in 2011 for the redevelopment of their White Hart Lane Stadium and the surrounding land, known as the Northumberland Park Development (NDP) Scheme (London Borough of Haringey, 2019). In 2015, Haringey Council's Planning Sub-Committee approved updated proposals to increase the capacity of the new stadium and increased housing provisions. Planning policy was key in

the delivery of this scheme, with the Tottenham AAP includes Policy NT7: Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, and details the new stadium development under the original planning permission (HGY/2010/1000), and how the site will be developed, along with its guidelines, objectives, character, and considerations. (London Borough of Haringey, 2017).

On a broader strategic level, the London Plan Policy 2.1 *London in its Global, European, and UK Context* aims to support London's unique strengths, including culture and tourism, and Policy 2.4 *The 2012 Games and their Legacy* recognises the potential for new or improved stadia and the regeneration benefits they can bring forward (*ibid.*). Policy 2.4 *The 2012 Games and their Legacy* is particularly relevant to the Olympic Stadium. Whilst not initially built for football, West Ham United FC secured a 99-year tenancy for the stadium for football purposes from the 2016-2017 season, naming it the London Stadium (Gibson, 2013). This policy states for a collaborative approach between the Mayor and London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) to ensure the long-term investment and convergence between the Olympic host boroughs and the rest of London with a regeneration scheme with the stadium at its core. The LLDC Plan 2015-2031 also references the Olympic Stadium site frequently throughout its policies. Policies SP1 and SP3 allude to the Olympic Stadium and its surroundings and earmark it for regenerative purposes, as does the Sub Area 3 *Central Stratford and Southern Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*, which aims that the site becomes a diverse area with high-profile education and sporting facilities with retail, housing, business, and leisure expansion with the stadium the basis of this regeneration.

2.4 Early Post-Taylor Report Stadia Construction

As alluded to previously, new stadia developments have become more common since the 1990s, however the approaches toward the implementation of these stadiums differ and have evolved over time. Whilst some newer proposals do offer wider regeneration initiatives, there are many examples of football clubs simply looking to build a stadium with minimal associated facilities, those of which are typically ancillary to the stadium itself; such as commercial spaces like club shops, and car parking around the stadium and limited improvements to transport infrastructure.

Before the Taylor Report, football stadiums were designed to fit as many people possible inside, to generate significant income for a club. However, the Report changed this discourse to getting people in and out as safely as possible (Fletcher & Sharp, 2012); one example is Huddersfield Town's old Leeds Road Stadium, which once held a record 67,037 crowd in 1932,

but then was limited to a crowd of 8,000 following the safety certificate being issued. This is just one example of how the limiting of capacity across the UK played a huge role in the economic viability and sustainability of football clubs and their stadia (*ibid.*). To address these financial concerns, football clubs constructing new stadia began to look at ways to diversify income streams, maximise all revenue opportunities, and use the stadium space more effectively.

Football clubs needed to implement diverse business initiatives to generate further revenue following the loss of ticket sales due to safety requirements after the Taylor Report. The aim was to create a portfolio of assets to reduce the club's overall financial risk (O'Reilly, 2013). As such, many football stadiums built soon after the 1990s paid attention to additional revenue streams; catering, exhibitions/club museums, club shops, hotels, offices, banqueting, conference facilities, hospitality, casinos, and sponsorship opportunities (Fletcher & Sharp, 2012).

Following the capacity limitation of their old stadium, Huddersfield Town's new McAlpine Stadium became one of the first new, relocated stadiums following the Taylor Report in the UK. From Fletcher & Sharp (2012); the key actors had to make sure that the stadium turned into a 365-day a year scheme to shift from the 2 match days a month financial gain. The stadium was opened in 1995 and became a blueprint for other football stadium developments to follow. Along with a 25,000 all-seater stadium, there were 25 executive boxes, a 500-seater banqueting hall, 40,000. concert capacity venue, and parking for 2,000 cars (p. 168).

However, an issue that has arisen with the construction of new sports stadia is that these developments are prone to becoming 'white elephants'; obsolete or underused areas that become cost burdens to cities (Davis, 2019). Whilst such a term is mostly associated with stadiums that have hosted Olympic events, the characteristics of 'white elephants' can be applied to football stadia by virtue of their maintenance costs, under-utilisation on non-matches, and spatial isolation to any surrounding amenities. This spatial isolation is attributed to the trend of these new stadiums being located away from town centre locations as the land to purchase and rent was considerably cheaper (Penning, 2012). One example is the Kassam Stadium in Oxford (Figure 1), opened in 2001, which is surrounded by car parking and is only at full capacity on match days twice a month, with the rest of the time being empty.

Figure 1: Underutilised parking space at the Kassam Stadium, Oxford



(Source: Google Maps, Author, 2019)

Whilst some stadiums have been built in spatial isolation like the Kassam, some have made efforts to reverse any potential ‘white elephant’ label. An example is the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. Originally built for the Commonwealth games, it was isolated by virtue of the stadium being surrounded by car parks (Figure 2), but has since had conditions implemented for the stadium to include 4,500 hours of community use per annum, along with 5 acres of land donated to the City Council which was used for a community pitch and sixth form college (London Assembly, 2015). No houses were built by the club at the time, but Manchester City Council have since delivered 1,000 new homes in the surrounding area, and there are plans for further commercial and leisure-led development surrounding the stadium to replace the car parks (*ibid.*).

Figure 2: Car parks surrounding Etihad Stadium, Manchester



(Source: Manchester City Council, 2019)

This incorporation of community benefits and issues around isolation with football stadia construction created a shift in stadium proposals in the hope that they don't turn into 'white elephants' and gain approval in the planning system. One recent example has been with the Forest Green Rovers stadium, which was denied outline planning permission in June 2019. The proposed 5,000 seat, all-wooden stadium was refused at committee level as it failed to comply with local development plan policy. The scheme was contrary to policies relating to development in rural locations outside of defined development boundaries and had adverse impacts in the loss of the current stadium on the existing town of Nailsworth (Boobyer, 2019). Moreover, some councillors raised concerns about the noise and landscaping issues surrounding the stadium and believed that it would not provide enough benefits for the local community. This highlights the shift in approach when dealing with football stadium planning applications in recent years. From football clubs wanting to maximise revenue opportunities at their stadiums by diversifying their income, now the focus is drawn towards the wider locality of a football ground through wanting to avoid these 'white elephants' and wanting to pursue a

development which can bring about long-term success and viability to an area all-year around, not just on football match days.

2.5 Successful Stadia-led Regeneration Schemes

The previous section highlighted the evolution of how football stadiums were designed since the Taylor Report to incorporate more revenue opportunities. This evolution then went a step further, with Arsenal FC's Emirates Stadium the flagship development for football stadia including wider regeneration initiatives for the local community.

Stadia are unique as they can entice a large population of people across the demographic spectrum to congregate into one place (Adams, 2018). Despite the safety improvements of post-Taylor Report stadia, many are now being criticised for creating major voids within areas of towns and cities; with Judt (2017) claiming that these large-scale venues can block out areas within neighbourhoods. Moreover, stadium users spend little money at local businesses when they travel to the area themselves, which was alluded to section 2.4. Adams (2018) believes that the integration of the stadium within the existing neighbourhood through the creation of constant foot traffic and the incorporation of local businesses into any new stadia development is a useful approach in trying to combat this problem. The London Assembly (2015) recognised that new stadia must not occupy large land areas at the expense of the communities that host them, and this has begun to see wider regeneration schemes becoming integrated with new stadia developments on a more frequent basis.

These wider regeneration objectives take many forms. Arsenal FC's 60,000-seater Emirates Stadium led the wave of stadia-led regeneration schemes in one of the most deprived boroughs in London (The Telegraph, 2016). The £390 million project was completed in 2006 and included wider regeneration contributions such as a new £70 million Waste Recycling Centre, an Adult Learning Centre, over 200,000 sq. ft of commercial space, 3,000 homes, and 655 converted apartments at the old Highbury Stadium (London Assembly, 2015). The football club proclaim that the stadium regeneration scheme is one of the largest in Europe, with over 2,600 new jobs and the investment of over £100 million in S106 agreements encompassing over 60 acres of land within the Borough were still occurring in 2017 (Arsenal FC, 2017).

In the case of THFC's new stadium development, the planning permission was split into three phases; the Stadium, the Northern Development, and the Southern Development. Whilst the Stadium Development included the stadium itself, it also comprised of a club retail superstore,

club museum, and cafe. The Northern Development secured a mixed-use building with car parking, a retail foodstore, and office and hospitality space, with the Southern Development outlined 200 residential units, office space, and a hotel. The scheme itself represents a near £1 billion private sector investment by the football club into one of the most deprived LPAs in the country (Panton, 2017). The stadium development will support over 3,500 new jobs contributing to around £293 million into the local economy each year, and the club has built 256 affordable homes and counting, alongside a 400-pupil primary school (London Assembly, 2015). The importance of this stadium-led regeneration scheme is reinforced by THFC Chairman Daniel Levy, stating that they didn't simply want to build a stadium, but they wanted to change the prospects for those living in this area of London, and for the stadium to kickstart its regeneration (Haringey Council, 2019).

The development of the new 90,000-seater Wembley Stadium paved the way for a regeneration hub around the stadium, where developers aimed to establish a high-quality serviced, up-scaled, and vibrant environment (Bowden Keene *et al.*, 2011). Since the development of Wembley stadium, the area has been in a constant state of regeneration, as it looks to revitalise all areas of life; encompassing the economy, local-to-national recognition, community excitement, and borough contributions to the City (*ibid.*). In its 2004 Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the London Borough of Brent stated that Wembley will create “an identity for the Borough” and include “substantial local benefit” (London Borough of Brent, 2004, p. 4). The stadium was fundamental to the regeneration process within the area, there have been over 1,000 new jobs in the surrounding retail outlets and over 500 housing units (45% affordable) were built within a few years of its opening in 2007 (London Assembly, 2015). Subsequent regeneration schemes have occurred since its construction, with current projects including the North End Road Connection and Wembley Housing Zone (London Borough of Brent, 2019). The surrounding community perceive the stadium as a local and national landmark, invoking pride and energy to the area, borough, city, and country (Bowden Keene *et al.*, 2011), and has been at the base of the regeneration processes occurring in the area.

2.6 A further evolution: Place Boosterism and Place-Marketing

The current evolution of football stadia construction posits what the next step is for stadia within the urban matrix. Smith (2005) highlights how several towns and cities have employed regeneration initiatives underpinned by sport stadia to further their reputations and modify the image of a place (such as the examples in Section 2.5) and defines this as place boosterism or

place marketing (Bale, 1988). Stadiums are heavily used in sports regeneration strategies due to their connotations with pride (Schimmel, 1995), modernity (Nielsen, 1995), and progress (Rowe, 1995)

The role of the stadia has evolved; the commercial value of sport as a tourist asset has been long recognised since the 1970s, but the direct use of the stadium as a financial asset was initially overlooked (Redmond, 1973). However, its importance as a component of the urban fabric of an area has been known throughout its changing utilisation within a space. Its fin-de-siècle importance as a source of place boosterism and place-marketing to add further values to places has been extensively researched (Gratton and Henry 2001; Peric et al. 2016; Wise and Harris 2017). However, a stadium's importance in the urban matrix precedes the commercial and financial recognition of the economic services it provides, with the previous examples highlighting how stadia can be used to create new landmarks and encourage development policies (Ahlfeldt & Maennig, 2010).

Bale (1991) defined the stadium as a physical and social space which facilitates a plethora of economic, social, and cultural processes, with Bairner & Shirlow (1998) also theorising that the football stadia had a deeper meaning beyond its immediate use-value on a matchday. This notion had been ignored by research which emphasised the economic importance of stadia by focusing on the externalities of large-scale stadia developments and private sector investors (Johnson & Whitehead, 2000). But it's important to identify that football clubs and their stadiums are a representation of place (Van Houtum & Van Dam, 2002). They were initially utilised as a symbolic source of local patriotism, but now there is more focus on the stadia being the basis of place boosterism.

Urban regeneration strategies have utilised sport to craft cities as desirable places to live and visit by catering to the sports-orientated 'visitor' (Elsinger, 2000) and 'creative' (Florida, 2002) class. The use of a professional sports team and the associated sports-related infrastructure appeals to city managers and local government officials as they can publicise the locality they represent (Koch, 2017).

In more recent years, the notion of 'sports-cities' has been put forward and applied to many areas across the world as a way of attempting to rationalise the costs of building new infrastructure, extending the economic benefits and legacy of a major sporting event, or as a method to 'brand' cities (Smith, 2010). The labelling of cities is not a unique phenomenon,

with many across the world utilising other forms of city identification such as ‘cultural cities’, ‘music cities’, and ‘cities of fashion’ (Pye *et al.*, 2015). As such, the concept of sports-cities is merely another in a growing trend of the re-imagination of cities and place marketing (Chalip, 2006). Whilst the consideration and subsequent application of the sports-city image has gained traction in recent years, there is a historical precedence. ‘Sports zones’ are traced back to 776BC Olympia in Greece (Smith, 2010), and the global expansion in the consumption of professional sport through major sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup and Commonwealth Games has meant that host cities have tried to create sports-related legacies through the stadiums and associated facilities and infrastructure concomitant with these events (MacAloon, 2008, Searle, 2002). Pye *et al.* (2015) highlight that major sporting events are not a compulsory pre-requisite for the establishment of sports-cities, but they can play a huge role (both in positive and negative terms) in their inception. Despite these potential risks, the use of sport to re-brand and re-imagine a city injects a sense of stimulation and excitement to a city’s vision and its subsequent growth (*ibid.*).

This has led to the concomitant rise in prominence of ‘sports tourism’ literature in recent years (Humphreys, 2019). This recognises stadiums and other sporting locations as having the means to contribute to a city’s image through tourism benefits. Higham (2005) expands on this, believing that the conceptualisation of sport through tourism generates revenue from markets seeking a different type of authentic experience. The range of sporting infrastructure and experiences consumed by sports tourists is extensive. As such, sports tourism doesn’t just include the active participation in sport or the spectating of matches and competitions (Weed & Bull, 2004). It can also include the viewing of sports heritage through museums, exhibitions, and ‘halls of fame’ (Gibson, 1998), or the engagement of sporting space through conference rooms, office accommodation, and hotels (Fletcher, 2012). This has resulted in some sports locations emphasising their use as a space of tourist consumption through the design of the venue and its use to maximise tourist revenues (Ginesta, 2017).

2.7 Concluding Thoughts

This literature review has investigated the role that stadia-led regeneration has played in helping to address the post-industrial decline which has occurred in many towns and cities in the UK. It has traced the evolution of stadia development from early post-Taylor Report developments since 1990, which saw a move towards out-of-town stadia developments where there was more space to build and cheaper land costs to now recent wider regeneration-focused

schemes being brought back into town centre locations. This posits questions for the next stage of stadia development with the inception of sports-cities and sporting quarters as a progression from stadia-led regeneration schemes. Whilst the current literature has focused on large-scale, 60,000+ capacity developments such as Wembley, the London Stadium, the Emirates, and the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, this stream of research has seldom investigated football stadiums being delivered on a smaller scale, outside of the EPL. There is little academic focus on new stadium developments in the EFL (tiers 2-4 of the English football pyramid), and so this study will look to address this research gap and investigate how clubs in the lower leagues of English football approach stadia-led regeneration schemes, and whether the reduced financial capital that these clubs have in comparison with the established EPL clubs studied above creates differences in the way in which this schemes are delivered. This study will look to assess the similarities and differences that are seen when investigating three case studies of lower league EFL clubs and to provide a deeper understanding of the evolution that stadia development has undergone since the Taylor Report.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Methodological overview

This methodology has been logically designed based upon a qualitative approach to investigate how EFL clubs are using stadia-led regeneration approaches to regenerate areas and identify how these clubs approach new stadia developments through the incorporation of the wider locality and what role planning plays in these schemes. The methods used will help uncover some of the unique experiences and processes that occur within these individual case studies. A consideration of ontology, epistemology, and methodology are a key feature of any research (Tuli, 2010)

This research aims to contribute to the growing evidence base investigating the relationship between stadia development and wider regeneration objectives, whilst attempting to address the paucity of stadia literature dedicated to developments on a different spatial scale at EFL clubs. Chapter 2 highlighted the plethora of literature which focused on large-scale stadia developments and sporting mega-events. However, there is a scarcity of stadia-based literature which emphasises whether these same regenerative processes are occurring on a smaller scale outside of the EPL.

As presented in Chapter 2, the initial stages of this research were formed by a desk-based review of the current literature on sports stadia, urban regeneration, and planning policy. This review helped to identify the existing evidence base and research gaps to be addressed for this paper; therefore, indicating the scope of the study and helped guide the research design regarding sampling methods and data collection.

An important feature of research is the explicit consideration of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigm that underpins all studies and shapes the conduct of inquiry (Scotland, 2012). Suggestions from Grix (2004, p.66) indicate the existence of a logical relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods and defines these as key building blocks of research. It is important to recognise a researcher's ontological and epistemological position with any research as it shapes the questions that are asked and how they are answered. As such, this chapter will briefly consider the philosophy of science and its approaches to develop a broader understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of this paper.

3.2 Ontological assumptions

A consideration of ontological concerns assumptions about the nature of reality; fundamentally it influences the way research questions are framed and how the researched is subsequently carried out. Ontological considerations review what exists, what units make it up, and how do these units interact, and there are two contrasting positions. The first position, *Objectivism*, asserts that social phenomena are objective entities and exist in an independent reality, separate to social actors (Tuli, 2010). As such, an *Objectivist* researcher's approach would see the world as an independent entity and aim to discover absolute knowledge about an objective reality, with 'meaning' existing solely within objects, not in the conscience of the researcher, whose goal is to obtain this 'meaning' (Scotland, 2012). The second perspective of *Constructivism* posits that reality is the product of social processes and is individually constructed (Neuman, 2003). It assumes that the world does not exist independently of our knowledge, and that social phenomena are continually being produced and accomplished by the interactions of social actors (Grix, 2004).

This research will rely on the subjective interpretations and individual opinions of unique case studies regarding stadia-led regeneration schemes in the UK, and so an *Objectivist* standing would lack the interpretative depth to fully understanding the unique processes occurring within these case studies (Smith & Firth, 2011). Therefore, a *Constructivist* ontological position was adopted for this research. This paradigm allows subjective responses to help generate a greater understanding of the social interactions at play and explore described the social realities that this research is ultimately looking to investigate further (Tuli, 2010).

3.3 Epistemological foundations

Epistemological assumptions concern the theory of knowledge in terms of its acquisition and communication; *what it means to know* (Scotland 2012, Gomm, 2008). Bryman (2001) underlines that the key epistemological debate is whether the social world can be studied to the same principles and assumptions as the natural sciences, which has given rise to two main epistemological positions; *Positivism* and *Interpretivism*.

Positivism assumes that social sciences are based on prediction and replicability, and that research is conducted to confirm generalised patterns of human activity through a combination of deductive logic and empirical observation of behaviours to wider contexts (Neuman, 2003). On the other hand, *Interpretivism* is best described by Maxwell (2006), who defines this approach as the world being constructed from the experiences and processes conducted by

people with their interactions with others and wider social systems. This asserts that the nature of inquiry is interpretative and subjective, and that the purpose of research is to understand unique phenomena which occur, not to generalise it to other contexts.

An *Interpretivist* approach is most suitable for this project for several reasons. Firstly, this approach tends to follow the *Constructivist* ontology already adopted, and is typically favoured amongst qualitative research (Tuli, 2010). This study will use interviews and secondary data analysis as key sources of data collection and the former rely on a relationship between participants and the researcher. This understanding of a specific context with participants interpreting their subjective realities will allow deeper insight into these case studies, adding richness and depth to the data collected (Tuli, 2010). Therefore, the *Interpretivist* approach is most fitting for this study, as there are few concerns relating to the generalisation to other social contexts, and there is more emphasis on creating a deeper understanding of the unique processes occurring within this context (Ulin *et al.*, 2004).

3.4 Research Design - Case Studies

This paper will adopt the case study research design to investigate three football clubs who have recently gone through the planning system successfully and are in the position of constructing their new stadium. Before going into detail about the individual case studies to be investigated in this research, it is important to consider the distinction between different types of case studies, as discussed by Yin (2003), and how the research is guided by this design. These case studies are categorised as ‘exemplifying cases’; whereby the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation and processes (Yin, 2003, p. 41). In this instance, these case studies have been chosen and will capture the ‘commonplace’ processes and conditions of urban regeneration approaches (Bryman, 2008), and will help to exemplify this broad categorisation of regeneration in which these stadium developments relate. ‘Exemplification case studies’ are chosen not because they are extreme or unusual, but because they can help provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered (*ibid.*).

Case studies are the prime example of qualitative research by virtue of its interpretative approach to data, the detailed investigation of processes occurring within their own context, and the consideration of the subjective meanings that people bring to their bounded system (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This qualitative research design depends on a researcher investigating a bounded system (a case study) over time, with detailed, in-depth data collection. This research

will look at multiple bounded systems and looks to understand the dynamics and relationships present within a single setting and the nature and complexities that arise within the case and allow for comparison (Panton, 2017; Bryman, 2008). Case studies are rich, empirical descriptions of a set of circumstances and instances of a phenomenon (Yin, 1994), and are used to provide examples and descriptions to generate, test, or even build theories (Eisenhardt, 1989).

One of the fundamental criticisms of the case study research design is that any findings derived cannot be generalised to a wider population. However, the primary justification for using a case study approach is to explore an example in depth, and not necessarily to generalise to wider contexts as they use a small number of participants (Biggam, 2015). Yin (1993) considers case studies to be microscopic because of the limited cases and its difficulty on generalisable conclusions, however these concerns are challenged by Hamel *et al.* (1993), who indicate that parameter establishment and the objective setting of the research is more important to the case study approach than a large sample size.

This paper will focus on three football clubs which each represent an individual case study. These three clubs were selected to investigate the impact of new stadia development and wider area regeneration for several reasons. Firstly, they have all had recent planning applications regarding their new stadiums approved in recent years. Secondly, they meet the criteria in addressing the research gap in stadia-based regeneration literature by being in the EFL, not the EPL which is important regarding the scale of these projects. Much of the present evidence base in the UK consists of literature surrounding the 90,000-seater Wembley Stadium, the 66,000-seater London Stadium (West Ham United), the 62,062-seater Tottenham Hotspur Stadium (Tottenham Hotspur FC), and the 60,260-seater Emirates Stadium (Arsenal FC). These three case studies provide characteristics which differ from current stadia literature which emphasises the macro-scale when considering stadium capacity. These case studies are smaller scale; Luton Town FC's new stadium has a proposed capacity of 17,500, Brentford's new stadium is expected to hold 17,250, and the first phase of AFC Wimbledon's new stadium indicates a 10,000-seater-stadium. Despite these recent stadia developments, these three football clubs have not had specific academic focus regarding their new stadia, with Brentford FC's new stadium being mentioned in passing by Panton (2017) and Porter (2019). Whilst Luton FC's current home (Kenilworth Road) was the focus of research conducted by Mason & Robins (1991), and much of the current literature on AFC Wimbledon addresses its creation

and rise up the football leagues and relationship after the replacement of its original club (Wimbledon FC) and the establishment of MK Dons, and not their new stadium (Cook & Anagnostopoulos, 2017; Hutchins *et al.*, 2009; Cleland & Dixon, 2015).

3.4.1 Brentford FC

Brentford FC (hereafter Brentford) are a professional football club based in Brentford, Greater London and play in the EFL Championship (Tier 2 of the English Football pyramid). Founded in 1889, they currently play their home games at Griffin Park, which holds 12,673 spectators in the London Borough of Hounslow. Planning permission for their new 17,250-seater stadium was initially granted by the Hounslow Council Planning Committee on 7th December 2017 (BFC, 2017) before an updated planning permission was issued on the 3rd February 2018 (BFC, 2018). The new 'Brentford Community Stadium' is expected to be ready for the 2020/2021 season and is part of a wider regeneration scheme for the area near Kew Bridge. The new stadia development is located 100m from Kew Bridge Station and is part of a mixed-use scheme. A new 'stadium campus' will be created with the stadium at its heart with a mix of sports & leisure, educational, and residential facilities being implemented as part of a larger urban quarter which will contribute to the existing neighbourhood. Moreover, a new public square will be established which will help bring together apartment buildings with the stadium, with over 910 homes expected to be built on the site (BFC, 2019).

3.4.2 Luton Town FC

Luton Town FC (hereafter Luton Town) are based in Luton, Bedfordshire and compete in the EFL Championship (Tier 2). The club was founded in 1885 and have played their home matches at the 10,356 all-seater Kenilworth Road since 1905. On 16th January 2019, Luton Borough Council granted the club planning permission to build their new stadium at Power Court, which signalled the end of a 70-year wait for the club trying to move to a new location (LTFC, 2019). The 'Power Court Stadium' will be a 17,500-capacity stadium is part of a mixed-use development which includes new residential apartments, a new river frontage, 50,000 sq. ft of retail and leisure facilities, and a new 1,800 capacity live venue, most of which will be funded by a separate development at Newlands Park from the developer 2020 Developments. The stadium is expected for completion for the 2020/2021 season.

3.4.3 AFC Wimbledon

AFC Wimbledon are in Kingston upon Thames, south-west London, and play in the EFL League One (Tier 3). The club was founded in 2002 by supporters after the Football

Association (FA) allowed the original club (Wimbledon FC) to relocate to Milton Keynes. As such, the new club was formed and played their games at Kingsmeadow (The Cherry Red Records Stadium for sponsorship purposes), but always desired to return to its 'spiritual home' in Merton and its original home of Plough Lane (AFC Wimbledon, 2019). On 10th December 2015, plans for the new stadium were approved by the London Borough of Merton, with the S106 agreements signed 13th December 2017 allowing the official decision notice being handed to the club (AFC Wimbledon, 2017). The development will initially be a 10,000-seater stadium that can be increased to 20,000, along with 602 new homes, retail space, and sports & leisure facilities in partnership with Galliard Homes. It is expected to be completed mid-way during the 2019/2020 season.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is a key aspect of qualitative research design (Mason, 2002). As the research design for this study employs the case study approach, it will comprise of a smaller sample size than a comparable quantitative study, with in-depth analyses of participant responses from the data collected (Robinson, 2014).

From the initial stages of this research, it was paramount that any chosen research design was able to include the key actors who are involved in stadium-led regeneration processes. As such, a purposive convenience sampling method was chosen. This method is a result of a combination of two sampling approaches used in research. Convenience sampling uses participants who meet certain criteria, which includes those who are easily accessible, available at a certain time, and are willing to participate in the study (Dörnyei, 2007). A purposive sampling approach works through the deliberate choice of participants by virtue of the qualities and knowledge that they possess on an individual basis and allows specific individuals who demonstrate specific features and processes of interest to be chosen (Etikan, 2016; Silverman, 2010). As this project looks at stadium-led developments and wider regeneration efforts currently taking place at EFL football clubs, this acted as a predetermined criterion which meant that the study requires certain individuals who are knowledgeable and aware of the developments being investigated in this study. As such, the LPAs for each of the developments were found and then planning officers were contacted to partake in an interview, they were chosen because of the information that they could provide about their involvement and knowledge regarding the associated case study.

It was important to the study that the sampling method chosen would be able to effectively understand the complex and subjective experiences of human behaviour in the specific context of these case studies. Due to this, random and systematic sampling methods were avoided in this study, as Marshall (1996) explains that these approaches do not fully capture the complex nature of human behaviour as it assumes that all individuals are the same in the sampling process, and this would be contradictory to the aims of this research and the ontological and epistemological positions undertaken for this study. Moreover, other studies of comparable nature have employed a purposive sampling method (ElGahani & Furlan, 2018; Houlihan & Green, 2009; Davies, 2005; Gray & Bagley, 2003) which demonstrates that this sampling method is appropriate for this research.

3.6 Data Collection & Analysis

The data for this research was collected between May and September 2019. Data collection occurred in two main ways; through semi-structured interviews and the thematic analysis of secondary material sources. LPAs were contacted via e-mail and planning officers responded whether they were willing to be interviewed. Unfortunately, responses for the semi-structured interviews were low for this study (3). This can be attributed to the research being primarily conducted whilst the football season was in its summer break, however upon conducting the interviews that were undertaken by the researcher, the reluctance for key stakeholders to speak on the record during the research became apparent, and this reflects one of the main methodological challenges in undertaking case study research. However, the incorporation of thematic analysis of planning documents available in the public domain meant that further data could be collated.

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

This study used semi-structured interviews (SSIs) for data collection and is one of the most widely employed methods in qualitative research (Bernard, 2011). Interviews are commonly used as an appropriate means of qualitative data collection and are an 'essential sources of case study information' (Yin, 2003, p. 89). SSIs are designed to ascertain subjective and personal responses from individuals pertaining to a situation or process in which they have experienced (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Jones (1985) defines interviews as a unique social encounter that provide rich insights into people's experience by going beyond quantitative descriptions and providing researchers with an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, taking an interest in the lived experiences of others (Seidman, 2013; Anyan, 2013).

The SSIs lasted around 45 minutes and were audio-recorded. The planning officers used in this study contributed based on anonymity and confidentiality. Interviews are challenging, as they can be time-consuming, labour-intensive, and require interviewer sophistication (Becker *et al.*, 2012), this was found in this study as many participants had not been involved in the stadium planning process since its beginning, and so were unable to answer every question in depth. SSIs can easily wander ‘off-script’ due to the open-ended questions posited to respondents, thus researcher’s need to achieve ‘active listening’, a skill which can be difficult to hone (Bryman, 2008), but the use of pilot interviews helped develop this skill. Bryman (2012) explores how SSIs are useful in uncovering social actions and learning about individual experiences, and theoretically justifies its appropriateness for this study.

3.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is an interpretive process whereby data is systematically analysed to identify patterns within the data to provide insights into a phenomenon (Smith & Firth, 2011). This approach allows for rich understandings of data that can expand or test existing theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is seen as a reliable, qualitative approach to analysing data (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013), but has been criticised for being subjective which can cause concerns when judging the rigour of any findings in terms of external validity (Attride-Stirling, 2001). However, this criticism can be given little weight due to the philosophical underpinnings of this study not needing to generalise to a wider context, but rather looking to understand a unique situation in further depth. In this study, the combination of data from SSIs and secondary data were analysed to allow the researcher to validate and cross-check findings with this combined approach (Patton, 2002).

3.7 Positionality

In any research it is important for a researcher to acknowledge their positionality and explicitly recognise that their position may affect the research process and outcomes (Berger, 2015). A self-evaluation of positionality doesn’t invalidate research as biased, but merely accepts that the research is grounded from a partial viewpoint.

The next chapter will demonstrate how these methods were delivered and the results gained from the subsequent analysis. The results will be clustered into relevant themes and sub-themes and discussed in conjunction with existing literature.

Chapter 4 - Results & Analysis: The Planning System in Action

4.1 Theme emergence

This Chapter will apply the methods and approaches highlighted in Chapter 3 to analyse and discuss the data used in this study. Following the thematic analysis of the interviews and secondary data related to the case studies, a total of **four** major themes with associated sub-themes were found, shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Themes generated from qualitative analysis.

Key Theme	Relevant Sub-themes
Regeneration	Regeneration, Place Boosterism
Planning System	Local Plans, the Planning System
Location	Out-of-town vs town centre, facilities
Stakeholders	Local Planning Authority, Planners, Supporters

(Source: Author, 2019).

Regeneration and place boosterism were the key themes that were drawn out from the interviews and analysis of planning documents, which tied into the second key theme of the role and the importance of the planning system. Furthermore, two additional themes related to the location of the stadium and the involvement of stakeholders throughout the stadium development process emerged from the analysis. The themes found all interlinked with one another and were referenced frequently throughout the analytic process and enabled the researcher to identify the importance of the role of planning in the delivery of new stadia and how these processes unfold.

The next sections will analyse and discuss the findings from the primary data source (stakeholder interviews) and secondary sources of data. These secondary sources are listed below in Table 5:

Table 5: Secondary data sources assessed for qualitative analysis.

Stadia Development & Club	Planning Application	Documents
Plough Lane - AFC Wimbledon	14/P4361	Statement of Community Involvement, Design & Access Statement, Planning Statement, London Plan
Brentford Community Stadium - Brentford FC	P/2017/3891	Statement of Community Involvement, Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, London Plan
Power Court - Luton Town FC	16/01400/OUTEIA	Statement of Community Engagement, Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Luton Local Plan 2011-2011

(Source: Author, 2019).

4.2 – Regeneration and the Importance of Place

The most pertinent theme to emerge from the data analysis is the reference to regeneration strategies from these stadia-led developments. Interviewee responses and documents alike both highlighted the importance of place; and how areas can be marketed and ‘boosted’ through the stadium regeneration process.

4.2.1 Regeneration Strategies

Regeneration forms the basis of each of these stadium-related planning applications. So much so, a keyword search of ‘regeneration’ in the Luton Town Planning Statement by Indigo Planning saw the word appear 165 times within the document. When asked about what the outcome of regeneration should be, the interviewees responded as follows:

“It should stimulate other developments to come forward to benefit from the increased footfall and vibrancy” (Interview 1)

“It’s obviously going to increase the value of that particular part of town...It should bring in a lot of people, that’s going to help the businesses within the town” (Interview 1)

“It’s not just bringing back derelict land, but it’s bringing back a better-quality environment...bringing more people into the town & circulating into the town” (Interview 2)

The responses from the interviewees demonstrate an understanding of regeneration that endorses Turok's (2005) definition of regeneration. The respondents referenced the stimulation of other business developments to come forward, increasing the value of land, and bringing more people into the area. This directly parallels Turok's exemplification of people, place, and business regarding urban regeneration and Boyle *et al.*'s (2018) conclusions that regeneration creates solutions to urban decline.

The stadium-led regeneration strategy case studies mentioned in Section 2.5 were characterised by an emphasis on the inclusion of residential, commercial, and office space, community facilities, waste recycling centres, schools, new jobs, and millions being invested into the local area through Section 106 agreements. The thematic analysis of the Planning Statements and Design & Access Statements of the three clubs was able to uncover the details of each club's respective regeneration strategy.

“To integrate the stadium into the wider Plough Lane development...a focal point and a catalyst for further development in the local area.” (AFC Wimbledon)

“602 residential units, 297 car parking spaces, 741 cycle spaces, 1,273 sq. m of retail space, public realm improvements, and a 1,730 sq. m squash and fitness club” (AFC Wimbledon)

The analysis of the planning documents associated with AFC Wimbledon highlighted the desire for the stadium to form a central component of the wider regeneration of the area, like the desire of Wembley being perceived as a chief landmark (Bowden Keene *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, the second extract highlights the amount of work being proposed by the football club on top of the stadium. As expected, the smaller financial and physical size of these clubs meant that the scale of which these works are not on the same level as those provided with Arsenal, Tottenham, and Wembley. 200,000 sq. ft of retail space provided by Arsenal FC (London Assembly, 2015) dwarfs the 1,273 sq. m of retail space provided by AFC Wimbledon, as does the 3,000 homes in comparison to just 602 residential units that AFC Wimbledon look to contribute.

“Assist in the regeneration of the area and build close links with local businesses and residents” (Brentford FC)

“Hospitality accommodation with non-matchday use...Office accommodation...Learning Zone...Future fit-out areas” (Brentford FC)

“910 residential units...Indoor recreation facilities...1,200 sq. m of retail, 160-bed hotel, 775 car parking spaces, 400 cycle spaces, public realm improvements” (Brentford FC)

The planning documents associated with Brentford FC highlighted similarities in the development proposals with AFC Wimbledon. Similarities relating to the vision of the stadium assisting in the wider regeneration of the area and the establishment of links with the local people ties in with Turok’s (2005) definition of regeneration and runs in parallel with what is being put forward by AFC Wimbledon. Moreover, the scale of the development proposals is similar; 1,200 sq. m of retail space and the parking provisions create a smaller developmental scale than seen in the case studies investigated in Chapter 2.

“550 residential units...Entertainment, music, and conference venue of up to 2,700 sq. m, up to 2,800 sq. m of educational, community, commercial floorspace, up to 2,600 sq. m of other entertainment” (Luton Town)

*“Up to 12,000 sq. m of hotel accommodation, up to 10,800 sq. m of retail, food, and beverage floorspace, a foodstore of up to 3,000 sq. m, up to 1,200 car parking spaces”
(Luton Town)*

Finally, analysing Luton Town’s development proposals found the most work being done in terms of additional works alongside the stadium development. Whilst the scale of development doesn’t match those at Arsenal and Tottenham, it highlights how much the club are doing to facilitate extra works alongside the stadium for the benefit of the wider community. The club has an appreciation for the proposed uses and understood how they must try to integrate with the rest of the already-established town centre, with Indigo Planning’s vision stating the stadium is an extension of the town centre, not in competition with it.

This section analysed the way in which regeneration was perceived and implemented with these differing stadia proposals. It is clearly seen that each football club had an understanding that the stadium can’t be implemented in isolation, highlighting the shift from early Post-Taylor Report stadia which were bounded by car parking. These clubs have looked to avoid the potential label of ‘white elephants’ (Davis, 2019) by the incorporation of different facilities around the immediate vicinity of the stadium site. This reaffirms the discourse shift which has started to occur at the top of English football being followed lower down in the EFL.

4.2.2 Place boosterism and marketing

The second sub-theme raised from the broader theme of regeneration was place boosterism and marketing. Just as regeneration forms the basis of these applications, this sub-theme relates to the vision of the place and how the area will be perceived and enhanced through the development proposal. It is an important component of any application as it provides insight into how the development will make the place ‘better’ than its current state (Bale, 1988). There are numerous references within the planning documents and from the interviewee’s responses which highlight the stadium and football club as symbolic sources of pride to accomplish this vision.

“When the football club did their community promotion, they hired out a big unit in the centre of town and had all of their proposals for the new club, most of it was the history of the club” (Interview 1)

“We went out to MIPIM, the international property conference a couple of years ago, the football club were there...promoting the regeneration of the town and promoting their scheme” (Interview 1)

“There’s this perception that the football stadium belongs to everyone, you know what I mean?” (Interview 1)

“They make a lot of it about the football club being the heart of the town” (Interview 3)

The interviewees alluded to the ways in which the football club presented the regeneration scheme to the public supporting the justification from Schimmel (1995). The football club heavily referenced the concepts of place and nostalgia, making sure that the importance of having the new stadium in the heart of the community was made explicit. It’s noted that they even went to an international property conference to promote the scheme on an international scale, as was the perceived importance of having the stadium within the community.

“Provide a social focal point with a buzz of activity” (Brentford FC)

“Deliver an iconic legacy...Create a new image for the town and contribute to the well-being of Luton as a whole...Raising ambition and aspiration levels in the town, while also correcting the negative image of Luton” (Luton Town)

“Help to achieve LB Merton’s aspiration for regeneration and transformational change”

(AFC Wimbledon)

The importance of place boosterism and marketing is also evident in the planning documents for each club. The extracts were taken from planning documents regarding each football club and focus on how the stadium development plans to deliver the vision of regeneration for each of the LPAs through marketing the developments as wholesale improvements to an area.

Invoking a sense of nostalgia and belonging to the football club for the community are heavily drawn upon as part of the vision for these development proposals. The Design & Access Statements and Planning Statements for all three clubs have specific sections on the history of the club, the role they play in the community and their journey towards the new stadium, as well as how the stadium will provide community-wide benefits as an integrated scheme. This shows how place boosterism and marketing the vision for the development proposal is an important part of the regeneration process and reinforces the conclusions found by Gratton & Henry (2001).

4.3 – The Role of the Planning System

4.3.1 Local Plan compliance

The second major theme that emerged from the analysis was the role of the planning system. This system decides whether the delivery of stadia is successful or not, and two main sub-themes emerged in relation to this overarching theme were the role of local plans and the planning application process.

“Considerations about the allocation of land for the football club” (Interview 1)

“Look at the policies in the local plan and obviously apply to the developments that come through” (Interview 1)

The respondents were quick to establish the role of the local plan in determining any stadium-related planning application and the importance of complying with these policies. As mentioned, the gap between planning policy and sport stadia has been bridged in recent years with policy makers recognising that sport can be used to address urban issues (Davies, 2010). This is shown through the integration of sports-related planning policy in Paragraph 92 of the NPPF and local development plans, such as London Plan with Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United. The interviewees demonstrated that planning policy regarding any new stadia was

considered during the drafting of the new local plan for Luton, but with the football club not knowing where to locate their new stadium during the drafting period resulted in the Council having to consider the wording of specific policies; namely Policy LLP9 of the Luton Local Plan, which is the key policy for locating the football stadium in its approved town centre location at Power Court:

“We couldn’t adjust the policy to say it should go in the town centre, so we have a policy for Power Court that says it’s suitable for main town centre uses and leisure uses but has stopped short at going as far as a football stadium” (Interview 1)

The Luton Local Plan underpins the delivery of the stadium, with Strategic Objective 9 wanting to deliver a new Luton stadium in a location capable of good access to infrastructure, and Policy LLP9 stating that Power Court is a key site for regeneration objectives and for providing a sustainable mixed-use development. It aims to deliver a mix of town centre uses, and highlights which uses which are acceptable in principle. The Planning Statement provided by Indigo Planning highlights the importance of complying with the Local Plan, stating that:

“1.4 The multi-purpose community stadium, as a Main Town Centre Use, will serve as the anchor and centrepiece of an exciting mixed-use development that will rejuvenate and regenerate a redundant industrial site and create a vibrant extension to Luton Town Centre”
(Luton Town)

“2.11 Given that the need for a new stadium for the Club is acknowledged and well understood, there is no need to provide detailed evidence on the need...the evidence has been provided and accepted” (Luton Town)

Much of the wording from Indigo Planning is directly taken from the Local Plan policy, to provide as little doubt as possible regarding the suitability of the site for a football stadium. The second point explicitly relies on the evidence base already provided by the Local Plan stating the need for development, thus highlighting the significance of the Local Plan in the decision-making process and emphasises the connection between sports and planning policy. The importance of the Local Plan for stadium deliverability is further shown with documents associated with the other two case studies. The Planning Statements concerning Brentford and AFC Wimbledon’s new stadiums gave weight to planning policies in the following documents:

“London Plan, Saved Policies of the London Borough of Hounslow Unitary Development Plan (UDP), Employment Development Plan Document (DPD), Brentford Area Action Plan (BAAP)” (Brentford FC)

“London Plan, Merton Core Planning Strategy, Merton Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Map” (AFC Wimbledon)

The Planning Statement for the Brentford Community Stadium by Planning Perspectives were quick to note Policy 4.6(A) of the London Plan which states that the Mayor and Boroughs should:

“Support the continued success of professional sporting enterprises and the cultural, social, and economic benefits that they offer to residents, workers, and visitors” (Brentford FC)

The Statement also references saved UDP Policy C.5.1A which relates to new stadia, and how the Council will adopt a sequential test approach to ensure the sustainability of any new stadium. The Statement then alludes to further policies within the UDP, and specifically Objective 9 of the BAAP which reads:

“The Council will continue to work in partnership with Brentford Football Club to explore the possibilities of delivering an exemplary sustainable sports stadium and community hub, supported by a variety of mixed uses in the East of Brentford” (Brentford FC)

In AFC Wimbledon’s case, the Core Strategy sets out the overall vision for the Borough of Merton to 2026, with the Planning Statement referring to the Strategic Objectives which underpin the plan, which includes improvements to the environment, promoting new homes through physical regeneration, and long-term economic growth. The Planning Statement also references the Merton Sites and Policies Plan, which allocates the site for *‘Intensification of Sporting Activity (D2 Use Class) with supporting enabling development’*.

The recognition of national to local planning policy from all three clubs highlights the fundamental importance of the planning system and Development Plans for an area (as mentioned in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). It is therefore demonstrated that the planning system plays a fundamental role in the delivery of stadia and that sports is being recognised as a key contributor to the planning system.

4.3.2 The Planning Application Process

“They came forward with the planning application which is not in conformity with the local plan” (Interview 1)

“The submission did not have all the information that was required for us to make a detailed assessment in terms of how the development would sit with the local plan, which is what the policies were there for” (Interview 1)

“You have to meet the requisite requirements of the policies” (Interview 1)

The importance of maintaining the integrity of the planning system was well understood. It was noted that the planning application submitted by LTFC did not comply with the Local Plan, and initially the application did not include the information needed for a development of its size. The stadium scheme was linked to an enabling out-of-town retail development which was cross-funding the stadium and was contrary to the Local Plan policies regarding the LPAs retail strategy.

“The main issues were the out-of-centre retail being used to cross-fund it” (Interview 1)

“Went against all of our retail policies” (Interview 1)

“The Council’s independent assessment...does state that it will have a significant negative impact on the town centre, and it will draw flagship stores away” (Interview 1)

This non-compliance with the Local Plan policies created issues surrounding the granting of consent for the stadium development. Even though there were many benefits for the stadium, the relevant planning policies can’t be ignored, and the consequences of ill-informed decision making were recognised:

“We can be challenged on our decisions if those decisions have not been correctly based on the relevant policies and national or local guidance” (Interview 1)

“As a professional, your assessment will be up to scrutiny by everyone...The local plan and information, those are our tools and that’s what we work with” (Interview 1)

It was well understood that exceptions cannot be made (even if for developments which would bring obvious benefits to the community) with any development, as this would undermine the integrity of the planning system.

It is clear to see the integration of sports and planning policy has been maintained and built on since the 1990s. The role of planning policy in shaping urban areas through sports infrastructure provision has been continued since the 1990s (Coaffee, 2008), and has gone further towards specific policy objectives in planning documentation being established to help facilitate the regeneration of urban areas as noted by Davies (2010).

4.4 – The Importance of Location

As mentioned previously, there is an interplay between football clubs and their stadiums with the representation of a place (Van Houtum & Van Dam, 2002). The next theme to emerge plays on the importance of having the football stadium within the district boundaries and having any new development at the heart of the community.

4.4.1 - Out-of-Town vs Town Centre

One of the main points to determine is whether an out-of-town or town centre location is preferred for a new stadium. Whilst access for suitable sites varies geographically, it is seen that town centre locations are being increasingly sought after with new proposals as opposed to those located on the outskirts of district boundaries.

“They weren’t clear exactly where they wanted to go, so it was quite hard to put that into the plan-making site assessment process” (Interview 1)

An interview response from Luton Borough Council highlighted that the club had the option of choosing between a town centre location at Power Court, or a site near the motorway at Junction 10A. The Council recommended the Junction 10A site and tried to work in partnership with the football club during the Local Plan drafting phase to help the planning application process, however the club were still unsure of their preferred location during this stage. As such, Strategic Objective 9 of the Local Plan stated that one of the fundamental goals were:

“To deliver a new Luton football stadium in a location capable of good access to transport infrastructure along with associated uses, shared venue events, and ancillary sport-related uses” (Luton Town)

Moreover, in the Planning Statement, Indigo Planning outlined the historic position of the Junction 10A site which was enshrined in Policy SA1 of the superseded Luton Local Plan 2001-2011 and claimed that the site allocation reflects out-of-date thinking for the new

stadium. Section 3.12 of the Planning Statement reflects their views on the town centre vs out-of-town debate.

“The Club believes that stadiums should be at the heart of the community, and LTFC is a community club” (Luton Town)

“The core of the Club’s fabric...its connection with the local community and the desire to retain a presence in and at the heart of the town” (Luton Town)

“It has extremely close ties to the local community and the Club wants these ties to be reinforced...the extent of the Club’s role in the community is set out within the Statement of Community Engagement” (Luton Town)

“A stadium at Newlands Park (Junction 10A) would isolate the club from the local community” (Luton Town)

It’s clear to see from the Planning Statement that the location of any new development was an important factor. They wanted a new stadium to be within the community itself, highlighting that the post-Taylor Report trend of developing out-of-centre stadia where land and development costs were cheaper had detrimental impacts on the ties between community and club. These views reinforce the research from Ahlfeldt & Maennig (2010), who concluded that a stadia’s importance in the urban matrix is down to the creation of a landmark for the community, and not the economic details behind its construction. The Planning Statement also acknowledged the findings from The London Assembly Regeneration Committee and used their findings to strengthen their opinion that a town centre location was best for the Club.

One of the main considerations when determining stadium-related planning proposals is how its location will impact the surrounding uses and how it would fit into the urban fabric. Whilst originally their recommendation was to put the stadium on the outskirts of the town, Luton Borough Council believed that a town-centre location would not give rise to any significant issues.

*“I don’t think as planning officers we had a lot of issues of it coming to the town centre”
(Interview 1)*

“We weren’t too concerned about having a town centre location because there’s already existing traffic congestion” (Interview 1)

These points raised from Planning Officers at the Council are broadly in keeping with the NPPF policies. Within the context of the NPPF, stadiums are classed as a ‘Main Town Centre Use’, and Paragraph 84 of the NPPF states that the use of previously developed land that are well-related to existing settlements should be encouraged. The term ‘well-related’ alludes to the interconnectivity of the site with its surroundings and whether it is ‘sustainable’, which links into the final sub-theme for this section.

4.4.2 - Existing provisions and improvements

Stadia are large-scale developments that take up large amounts of space within an urban space. The NPPF defines sports stadia as a space which attracts large swathes of people as they congregate on a matchday, and therefore, from an overall planning perspective, it is important from numerous angles that the surrounding facilities and infrastructure have the capacity to cope with a development at the scale of a football stadium.

“I think in terms of the town centre, that wasn’t the contentious part for us...we got the train station, busway, and everything else...in terms of the transport it made sense for it to come here” (Interview 1)

“Power Court is a town centre site with excellent accessibility, but is presently underutilised...highly sustainable in regard to sustainable transport and access...visible from the rail station” (Interview 1)

“Supporters will be able to go directly from the railway station...At the centre of three railway junctions” (Interview 2)

“The stadium is located within walking distance of stations and several bus routes” (Interview 3)

Paragraph 122 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land which considers the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services and has the scope to promote sustainable travel modes and limit future car use. All three stadium proposals are aware of the transport impacts of the congregation of fans on a matchday and can be seen to make appropriate provisions for sustainable access to the site to limit private car usage to-and-from the site, with the extracts above noting the nearby provisions of train and bus services.

“The site is highly accessible by public transport. Other transport modes are within comfortable walking distance. The location is close to the proposed route of a new Cycle Superhighway and cycle parking facilities will be provided” (Interview 2)

“Cycle parking will be provided” (Interview 2)

“Cycle parking spaces will be provided at the stadium and spaces will be provided in the public realm” (Interview 3)

Paragraph 91 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive, and safe places which allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections and encourage walking and cycling. This is reiterated in Paragraph 102 which states that opportunities to promote walking, cycling, and public transport use are identified and pursued. These inclusions in the design proposals for the stadiums support Adams’ (2018) conclusion that the integration of the stadium within existing areas is a useful way to help achieve sustainable development and create a more ‘positive’ planning application. These sustainable improvements also reiterate the words from the London Assembly (2015) which stated that any new stadia must not occupy large areas at the expense of communities, and these proposals look to integrate and make improvements to the public realm and accessibility to the area through these applications.

This data has shown the importance of locating a potential new football stadium from planning and historical perspectives. The trend of out-of-centre football stadiums built immediately after the Taylor Report is being reversed and the historic pattern of stadiums being in the heart of the community is being invigorated. However, stadiums are large-scale developments and cannot be developed at the expense of the existing community. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important that clubs are facilitating the improvement of the surrounding public realm, locating proposals near to sustainable transport sources, and making sure that they are in accordance with the sustainability objectives of the NPPF.

4.5 – Stakeholder Influence

The last theme to emerge from the data analysis relates to the role of different stakeholders throughout the planning process and how they influence stadium developments. The third part of Turok’s (2005) definition of regeneration alludes to the co-operation and partnership between different stakeholders throughout the regeneration process, and it is useful to see whether that is being implemented during the application stage. This theme was most

pertinently evident in the Statements of Community Involvement/Engagement provided by each football club, which outlined the consultation strategy; who the football club engaged with, along with how and why they did it.

4.5.1 Belonging to the Fans

Arguably, one of the most important stakeholders throughout the stadium redevelopment process are the fans of the respective football clubs. This is unsurprising given the mass interest in football, and so the high expectations from the fans with regards to the new football stadium and its delivery is understandable.

“There’s a lot of support for the football club...I believe it’s got one of the largest followings coming through” (Interview 1)

“Thousands of letters of support for the football stadium, I think there is a real following and a lot of support from local residents that the football stadium, that we should retain a football stadium within the Borough” (Interview 1)

“Supporter’s club...saying #SaveOurTown” (Interview 1)

“We had problems managing the public expectations” (Interview 1)

The interview responses highlighted the affinity between the football club and its supporters. They noted the supporting letters from fans and how they wanted the football stadium to be developed in the town centre location at Power Court. However, it is noted that there were problems in managing the public expectation of the stadium in terms of timeframe. This is most likely largely attributed to the public not fully understanding the intricacies of the planning process and what is required for application determination. Moreover, the hashtag from the supporter’s club which states “#SaveOurTown” potentially opens another field of research looking at the role of the internet and social media in campaigns for stadium redevelopment, which is not within the current scope of this study.

“Maintain its relationship with its fans...the effect of any relocation on the community and supporters has been forefront in the Club’s decision-making” (Interview 1)

“The design of the stadium is the culmination of many years of research and consultation with the Club’s Supporters...Create a unique experience to fulfil the expectations of the Club’s supporters” (Brentford FC)

“1,321 supportive comments (AFC Wimbledon)”

In the Planning Statements, all the football clubs made explicit reference to the supporters to play on the fact that the stadium would belong to ‘everyone’ as mentioned in Section 4.4.1. The above extracts show the extent to which the views of supporters are considered in each case study, highlighting that their views are very important to the delivery of the new stadia. Moreover, each club prepared a ‘Statement of Community Involvement/Engagement’ accompanying each application, and in every case the supporters were heavily involved throughout the planning process. In the case of Brentford, a third-party company were employed by the football club to conduct a professional consultation strategy, as was the perceived importance of communicating with the supporters.

“Supporters at the Club were kept fully involved in its progress” (Interview 2)

“We identified the community groups and other key stakeholders in the area...built up a List of Stakeholders” (Brentford FC)

“Four Communications, a specialist public relations agency, was appointed by the Applicant to develop a strategy for and carry out community and stakeholder consultation activities” (Brentford FC)

4.5.2 The role of the LPA

The second sub-theme and key stakeholders to emerge are the LPAs and planning-related stakeholders involved in the application process. Similarly, to 4.5.1, the Statements of Community Involvement/Engagement conducted referenced engagement with the LPA, especially during the pre-application stage, which takes into consideration Paragraph 39 of the NPPF which states that early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.

“During the pre-application phase, we contacted local councillors and maintained a dialogue” (Interview 2)

“The applicant has met with the Council and other key consultees through the formal pre-application process about the prospects of relocating the Club to Power Court” (Luton Town)

*“Consultation activities for this application were carried out in conjunction with the Applicant’s project team’s work with the London Borough of Hounslow’s planning officers”
(Brentford FC)*

Whilst the level of consultation of in keeping with the objectives of the NPPF and this amount of dialogue between the key stakeholders is useful in the efficiency and effectiveness of determining the application. The interviewee responses highlighted issues which relate to stakeholders becoming a bit too involved in the planning application process.

“There’s a lot of political pressure then to do what the football club wants to do...Fear of not being re-elected” (Interview 1)

*“Leaning on us to say certain things in reports that were positive to the application”
(Interview 1)*

“The other issue...The amount of influence that individual parties like football clubs have on how Council’s develop their policies” (Interview 2)

“Overshadowed by other interests” (Interview 3)

These extracts uncover the behind-the-scenes politics in the planning system. In this case, councillor’s and other key stakeholders were pushing for the application to be approved without haste, to appease the large number of supporters and to help develop the local economy with what the development proposals could potentially bring, citing the conclusions from Panton (2017) regarding political resistance. However, as mentioned in Section 4.3.2, planning officers are subject to professional standards and must judge applications in line with material considerations. The discretionary nature of the UK planning system means that applications take more time to process and therefore the potential for conflict rises, and this grows in magnitude with numerous stakeholders trying to influence the process, and this is what the respondents mean when interests can be “overshadowed”.

4.5.3 Local business concerns

The last group of stakeholders which were referenced in the data analysis were the existing local businesses that would potentially be impacted by the stadium development, and how the stadium development would affect the role in which these existing businesses already have a huge part in the urban fabric.

“Help the club build close links with local businesses” (Interview 1)

“improving facilities and opportunities in the town is key” (Interview 2)

“The consultation process has engaged with a wide range of individuals and groups...local businesses have been involved” (Interview 3)

The Statement of Community Involvement/Engagement from the football clubs each explicitly mention the impact that the new development could potentially have on existing businesses in the local area, and it's clear that the route is to help establish connections with existing businesses, and not try to compete and ultimately replace them. This is being done through consultation and making sure that their concerns are addressed.

“The Mall Group...concerned about the impact on retail on the Mall, the big town centre shopping centre” (Interview 1)

*“Proprietors of neighbouring businesses...specific concerns...regarding the applications. We shall be continuing a dialogue with these individuals throughout the application process”
(AFC Wimbledon)*

These concerns are particularly highlighted in the case studies in Luton and Wimbledon, whereby local businesses have raised concerns over the potential impact of new commercial and retail opportunities and highlights how other stakeholders are beginning to realise the role stadia can play in changing areas (Bulley, 2002). In AFC Wimbledon's case, the football club remained in close dialogue with the businesses and looked at specific concerns about the application, but nothing else has been divulged in the public planning documents so it is unclear how these were addressed and what the outcome was. However, with the case of Luton, Indigo Planning submitted representations to the draft Luton Local Plan as the Council had concerns over the enabling development for the stadium which comprised of an out-of-town shopping centre which would directly compete with The Mall, the existing town centre retailers. Indigo Planning ensured that this enabling retail development would provide a “high-quality shopping and lifestyle destination” and fulfil a different role to the existing town centre, thus justifying its inclusion and making sure that the existing town centre remains key to the town.

4.6 - Conclusions

To conclude, this chapter has applied thematic analysis to sources of spoken and written language to the on-going stadium developments at Luton Town FC, AFC Wimbledon, and Brentford FC. In doing so, it has identified the role of the planning system in the delivery of these stadiums, along with the continued reference toward regeneration and place boosterism and how the stadium will change the vision of a place. Moreover, the importance of location and surrounding facilities were uncovered during the analysis, and how the role of stakeholders act as a platform of influence on planning officers, the application itself, and local planning policy. Whilst all three case studies differ in terms of size, provisions, and scale, the overall vision is broadly similar; to improve the existing site and enhance the local area surrounding it with the football stadium acting as the catalyst for this urban regeneration.

The final chapter will discuss the findings in relation to the research objectives, as well as address limitations and future directions of research for this field.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

5.1 Summary of Findings

Urban decline has been an issue in UK towns and cities since the collapse of the manufacturing and industrial sector towards the end of the 20th century. As such, urban regeneration schemes have become more common to rejuvenate deetiolated areas. At the same time, football stadiums across the UK were under scrutiny by virtue of the findings of the Taylor Report (1990) which brought in new safety regulations. Many clubs chose to relocate their stadiums considering these safety requirements, with an early trend of football clubs moving out of town centre locations where land was available and cheap. However, this trend looks to have reversed, with football clubs looking to move back to central locations to re-establish ties with the community and invigorate areas with the football stadium taking the lead role in an area's regeneration. This has resulted in the rise of stadia-led regeneration in areas which have experienced urban decline to attract investment through large-scale, sports-related development.

The review of current literature traced the origins of both urban regeneration and how stadia-led regeneration has evolved over time to become a key approach in revitalising areas. It highlighted the trends in stadium development through case studies, and how the approach to stadium development has changed since the 1990s and has become an important strategy for regeneration. The research gap was highlighted whereby the existing academic research only focused on football clubs in the EPL, with no specific case study research on clubs in the lower leagues, specifically the EFL. As such, three key research objectives were formulated, and the following sections summarise the findings in relation to each of these:

5.1.1 Tracing the approach of EFL clubs and wider regeneration

This research objective looked to highlight how EFL clubs approached new stadia developments and how these schemes were beneficial to the wider community.

From the data it seems that the clubs were keen to avoid the label of 'white elephants' (Davis, 2019), and this was done through the incorporation of the new stadium being integrated into the existing community. This integration into the wider locality was primarily done by re-establishing ties with the community; in a physical sense by bringing the stadium back to a central location, and in an abstract way of invoking a sense of nostalgia and belonging to the football club. This was conducted with the tracing of its history and ties with the local space in the planning documents associated with each club and marketing the 'vision' of these new

spaces as one which belongs to the community. These findings highlight the importance of the vision for a proposal and how stadia-led regeneration plays a key role (Gratton & Henry, 2001).

In terms of impact, whilst the stadiums in this paper haven't been fully completed, there are still impacts on the community that have emerged from the data. The impact on the retail strategy for the town was made explicit in the Luton case study, with the existing shopping centre in the town concerned with the retail park on the outskirts and its effect on the high street. There was not enough data to go into comprehensive depth on this sub-theme, but it shows that there are impacts on the existing community throughout the stadium development process, from construction to use.

5.1.2 Assessing the success of stadia-led regeneration schemes

This research objective investigated how successful stadia-based regeneration schemes have been in revitalising areas through case study analysis. This was completed in a twofold manner; firstly, it was completed in the analysis of existing literature of case studies. The existing literature highlighted the trend of early post-Taylor Report stadiums being constructed in peripheral locations due to cheaper land prices, and then the implementation of secondary income sources such as banqueting and conference facilities to make stadiums more economically viable. The review found that whilst these secondary sources still occurred, stadiums were beginning to return to urban centre locations to regenerate areas experiencing decline, with the successes at Arsenal, Tottenham, West Ham United, and Wembley all being investigated. These are all case studies of large-scale stadia (60,000+ capacity), and it was found that these stadia-led schemes help rejuvenate urban areas. Secondly, the stadiums in this study were envisioned to revitalise the areas surrounding them. Whilst the stadiums in this study weren't completed (thus the success cannot be fully assessed), an assessment into the vision of the development in relation to NPPF Chapter 8 Paragraph 92 can be used to gauge a certain extent of 'success'. This paragraph addresses the provisions for social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services the community needs. The first point under this paragraph states that there should be positive plans for the provision of community facilities and other services to enhance the sustainability of the community, and with the numerous indoor recreation centres, food stores, and educational facilities associated with each development it's safe to say that there are community provisions being facilitated. All the regeneration efforts associated with the stadium developments also meet other sections of this paragraph; for example, supporting health, social, and cultural well-being for all sections of the community, guarding

against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services by integrating existing businesses into the new development, with their retention benefiting the community. Finally, this all builds to an integrated approach which considers housing, facilities, and services, which underpins the message from Paragraph 92. From looking at this paragraph in conjunction with the development proposals, these developments can be considered, to an extent, successful.

5.1.3 The planning system and the differences in scale

The final objective was to explore the role of the planning system in the delivery of stadium development, and how the differences in scale for stadia proposals.

The importance of the planning system has become more prominent since the integration of sports and planning policy from the 1990s. This has taken the form of specific policy objectives in planning documentation being established to help facilitate the regeneration of urban areas as noted by Davies (2010). This is most notably expressed in Chapter 8 Paragraph 92 of the NPPF which was mentioned above. This paper looked at stadium developments which are being constructed on a smaller scale to those already focused on in existing literature (60,000+ capacity). The differences in scale is relevant to the stadium capacity and the extent of regeneration, with stadiums in this study had capacities of below 20,000. These clubs were also in the lower divisions of English football, where financial capital is lower than in comparison to the EPL. The development at AFC Wimbledon looked to construct 602 homes which is far fewer than the 3,000+ homes associated with Arsenal and Tottenham's stadium development. This is just one of many examples of these case studies providing the same type of regeneration efforts as the larger case studies, just on a smaller scale, which highlights that stadia-led regeneration can be implemented and be effective on varying scales. This means that every football club who are looking to build new stadiums should follow the current stadium regeneration discourse in town centres to implement their vision for the benefit of the wider community, as it has been shown that it can be beneficial to the wider locality, not just the football club itself.

5.2 Limitations

The key limitation of this study was the small research sample. It would've been useful to increase the sample size interviewed, however it was difficult for participant availability during the research period. This is mainly attributed to the research being undertaken outside of the football season and subsequent summer holiday leave. Moreover, from the interviews conducted, it was discovered that the schemes were contentious in parts with differing opinions

with key actors. This was also highlighted by the fact that some key stakeholders declined the opportunity to be interviewed when asked.

Furthermore, there was a limitation in the depth of research. There were hundreds of consultee comments that were unable to be analysed in this study as it would've increased the magnitude of this research to an unmanageable size for a project of this scale, which then would've been multiplied threefold by virtue of the number of case studies. If the research were to include these further data sources, then it would be useful to reduce the number of case studies to provide a more in-depth analysis of documents for a single case study. Finally, another limitation was the length of study. The processes that these developments have had to undergo last far longer than the duration of this study. This study will be unable to truly measure the regenerative impacts of these stadia-led schemes until they are fully constructed, which will still take years from the completion of this research.

5.3 Future Directions

There are many directions in which studies of comparable endeavours could research. As mentioned in the limitations section, the time it takes for the stadium application to fully go through the planning system takes far longer than the duration of this research project. Therefore, one future direction could relate to a longitudinal study which traces the impacts of the stadium scheme from its inception to its delivery. Along this point, a future topic of research would be to revisit these three case studies once the stadium has been delivered and in use to see the regenerative impacts of the schemes and whether they match the visions created in the planning documents.

Moreover, further studies could explore the sub-themes which were touched upon in this study but where the data gathered was not enough to go into comprehensive depth. These sub-themes include stakeholder perspectives, the role of the internet and social media, and the impact of large-scale development on town centre retail strategies. Lastly, research could be directed in the way of English non-league football, which is an under-researched area of study (Cleland *et al.*, 2018), with clubs such as Dulwich Hamlet and Cambridge City going through the planning process on an even smaller spatial scale than the clubs researched in this study.

5.4 Final Remarks

This research project has found that new football stadiums are being constructed to counter urban decline with wider regeneration strategies in mind. It has traced the catalyst to new

stadium development in the Taylor Report in 1990 and seen how stadia construction has evolved since this point, moving to out-of-town locations before this new trend of stadiums returning to the town centre. Existing literature provided the basis of these trends and highlighted the evolution of how stadiums were constructed in the case studies of Arsenal, Tottenham, West Ham, and Wembley. A review of existing planning policy in the NPPF has also demonstrated the role of the planning system in the delivery of such stadiums. The insight gained from this paper demonstrates that stadia-led regeneration can be an effective approach to combat areas suffering from urban decline, and that it can be scaled down to lower league football. Moving forward, it would be unsurprising to see more football clubs wanting to relocate to a new stadium and including wider regenerative efforts for the surrounding area to justify and enable the stadium development itself.

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Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment - Ethics Review Form E1

- This form should be completed jointly by the **Supervisor and Student** who is undertaking a research/major project which involves human participants.
- It is the **Supervisor** who is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.
- Before completing this form, please refer to the University **Code of Practice for the Ethical Standards for Research involving Human Participants**, available at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/> and to any guidelines provided by relevant academic or professional associations.
- Note that the ethics review process needs to fully completed and signed **before fieldwork commences**.

(i) **Project Title:** Planning for Sport: Stadia Development and Urban Regeneration with English Football League Clubs

(ii) **Name of Supervisor and School in which located:** Beacon Mbiba, School of the Built Environment



(iii) **Name of Student and Student Number:** Kieran Tang, Student Number: 18036820

(iv) **Brief description of project outlining where human participants will be involved (30-50 words):**

This project will investigate the relationship between stadium developments and wider regeneration objectives with English Football League clubs. Human participants will be involved during the data collection stage through semi-structured interviews; they will be asked about their football club's stadium initiatives and the planning actions that need to be considered.

		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	If the study will involve participants who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under the age of 18, people with learning disabilities), will you be unable to obtain permission from their parents or guardians (as appropriate)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Will the study require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for initial access to groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students, members of a self-help group, employees of a company)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Are there any problems with the participants' right to remain anonymous, or to have the information they give not identifiable as theirs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	Will it be necessary for the participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	public places?)		
6.	Will the study involve discussion of or responses to questions the participants might find sensitive? (e.g. own traumatic experiences)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8.	Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9.	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10.	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing of participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13.	Will deception of participants be necessary during the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14.	Will the study involve NHS patients, staff, carers or premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Signed :			Supervisor 24/06/19
Signed :	Kieran Tang		Student
Date:	21/06/2019		

What to do now:

1. If you have answered 'no' to all the above questions:
 - (a) The student must **send** the completed and fully signed E1 form to their **Dissertation Module Leader**.
 - (b) The student must keep a copy of the E1 form which must be bound into their dissertation as an appendix.
 - (c) The supervisor must keep a copy of the E1 form as they are responsible for monitoring compliance during the fieldwork.

2. If you have answered 'yes' to **any** of the above questions:
 - (a) The supervisor and student must complete the TDE E2 form available at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/Ethics-review-forms/>
 - (b) Note that the information in the E2 must be in **sufficient detail** for the ethical implications to be clearly identified.
 - (c) The signed E2 and signed E1 Form must be emailed to Bridget Durning (bdurning@brookes.ac.uk) who is the Faculty Research Ethics Officer (FREO) for review. Please allow **at least two weeks** for this review process.
 - (d) If/when approved the FREO will issue an E3 Ethics Approval Notice.
 - (e) The student must send the E1, E2 and E3 Notice **to the Dissertation Module Leader**.
 - (f) The student must also keep copies which must be bound into their dissertation as an appendix.
 - (g) The supervisor must keep a copy of documentation to monitor compliance during field work.

3. If you answered 'yes' to any of questions 1-13 and 'yes' to question 14, an application must be submitted to the appropriate NHS research ethics committee. This is an onerous and time consuming process so the supervisor should liaise early with the FREO if the student is considering this.