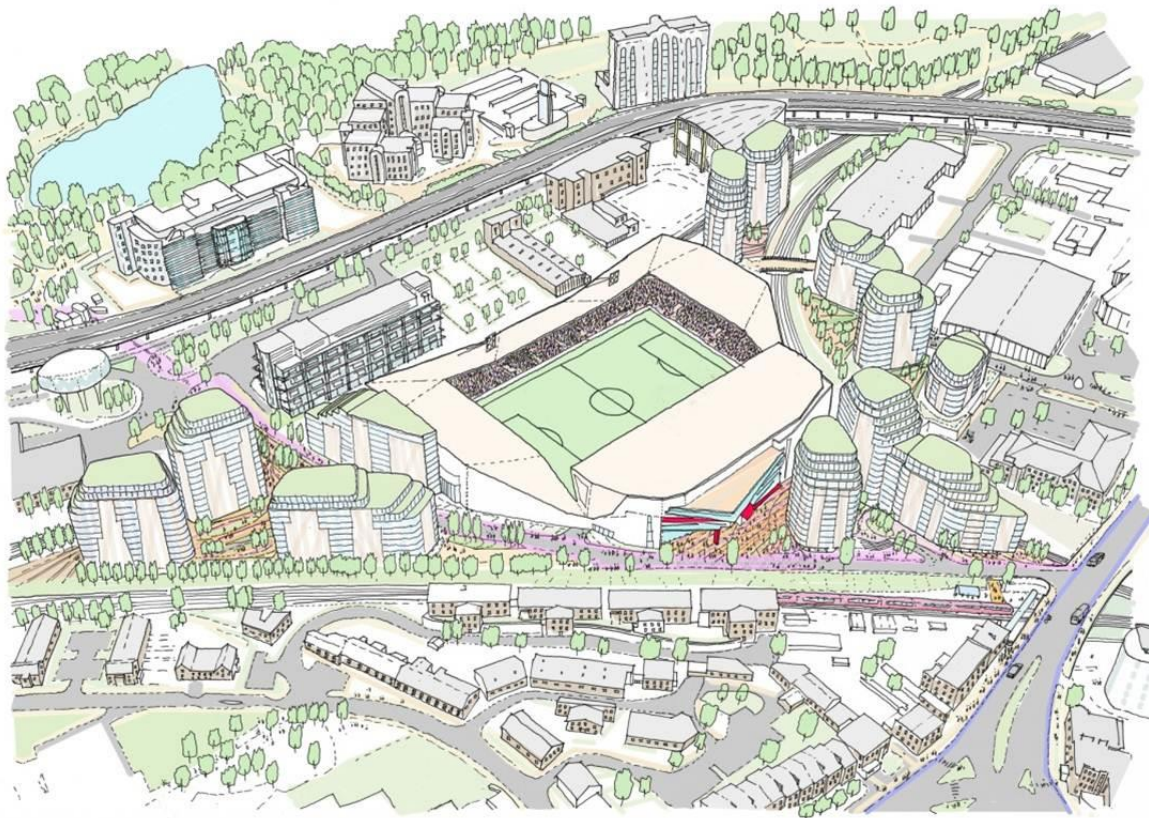




BRENTFORD COMMUNITY STADIUM

More than just a football club

Planning Application by Lionel Road Developments Ltd



An Overview

May 2013



The purpose of this document is to introduce interested parties to the Brentford Community Stadium proposals that are the subject of a planning application submitted by Lionel Road Developments Limited at the end of May 2013.

The full planning application can be inspected at the London Borough of Hounslow Civic Centre and in the Brentford and Chiswick libraries. It can also be accessed via the Council's website (www.hounslow.gov.uk) where comments on the application may be submitted. The documents that comprise the application are also viewable at www.brentfordcommunitystadium.com.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Brentford Football Club was established in 1889 following a meeting on 10th October that year at the Oxford and Cambridge Public House adjacent to Kew Bridge. The Club's first home was a recreation ground in Brentford, but on the 1st September 1904 the Club played its first game at its current ground, Griffin Park.
- 1.2 The Club has had mixed fortunes over the subsequent 109 seasons. The Club's most successful era was in the 1930s following promotion to the old First Division in 1935. In its first season in the top flight, the Club finished in fifth place, above Arsenal and Chelsea. After the war, and indeed until very recently, the Club went through a period of decline and stagnation, intermittently interrupted by ownership turmoil.
- 1.3 However, stability began to return to the Club in 2003 when the Supporters' Trust, Bees United, took operational control. Three years later, with financial help via loans, supporter donations and from Brentford fan Matthew Benham, Bees United bought a controlling shareholding in January 2006 and the Club became London's first professional football club owned by its supporters.
- 1.4 Since then, the Club has largely played in the third tier (League 1) of English football. Off the field, Bees United and Matthew Benham entered into a five year partnership agreement in 2009 whereby he would invest significant amounts of capital in return for the option of owning the Club should the Supporters' Trust not wish to repay his investment. This investment has started to bear fruit with the Club narrowly missing out on promotion to the Championship and enjoying a strong run in the FA Cup in the season to May 2013.
- 1.5 In 2012, the Bees United Board indicated to its members that the option be bought forward, and after an overwhelming vote in favour, Matthew Benham purchased the controlling shareholding of Brentford Football Club from the Trust. However, the Trust retains a 'Golden Share' which protects the Club from any sale of the current or future ground which is not in its best interests.

2.0 THE CLUB'S AIMS

- 2.1 The challenge for the Club is to achieve long-term sustainability. To do this, there must be two strands to its success.
- 2.2 First, the Club must be as successful as possible on the football field. To effect this, in recent years the Club has invested significantly in its playing infrastructure with projects including:
 - Enhancing the Club's training facilities;

- Recruiting a first class player support team, including significant increases in player management, medical, physiotherapy, analytical and training staff; and
 - Developing the Club's academy operations, including building a new indoor academy facility due to open late in 2013.
- 2.3 With this investment, the Club aims to develop its own high quality players rather than just exposing itself to an ever-increasing player budget. The introduction by the football authorities of financial fair-play regulations places even greater emphasis on this initiative.
- 2.4 The second strand to the Club's sustainability is to broaden its business model to enable the Club to generate income from beyond football success. A key element is an appropriately located and sized stadium capable of maximising income on match days and generating significant income at other times. To achieve this, the Club must have a stadium that is a business in its own right operating way beyond its football function.

3.0 AN EXTRA DIMENSION

- 3.1 Befitting a club with such supporter involvement, Brentford is a nationally recognised, award-winning, role model of a community focused football club. Those awards included:
- 2006 Football League Community Club of the Year;
 - 2007 Football League Best Club Sponsorship;
 - 2009 Football League Two Community Club of the Year; and
 - 2010 Business in the Community – CommunityMark (the only Football League Club to be so awarded).
- 3.2 The focus of the Club's community activity is the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust. This charity was originally established in 1987 as a partnership between the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing and the Football Club. It now has an annual turnover of £1.3 million and:
- Delivers over 7,700 sessions annually;
 - Reaches 150,000 participants benefiting from 356,000 contact hours;
 - Delivers 27 different sports in four London boroughs;
 - Is involved in 424 projects in the four key areas of sports participation, health, education and social inclusion; and
 - Employs 28 staff, a pool of around 70 coaches and a number of other volunteers.
 - Operate the Brentford Boating Arch at Kew Bridge.

- 3.3 The Brentford FC Community Sports Trust now embraces the Griffin Park Learning Zone. The Zone operates an expanding education and training programme, for both students and adults, and uses the power of sport to motivate, raise self-esteem and improve attainment in literacy, numeracy and information technology.
- 3.4 These activities mean that Brentford is much more than a football club. It is a community asset that contributes enormously to the Brentford area in many different ways. It is an entity that must be protected and helped to flourish in the future.

4.0 THE CHALLENGES

- 4.1 The difficulty is that Brentford Football Club, both as a sporting entity and a community organisation, will not have a sustainable future if Griffin Park remains as its stadium.
- 4.2 The first problem is its size. With a maximised capacity of 12,300, which would have to reduce to 11,000 if the Club was promoted to the Championship to meet its all-seater requirements, the Club simply cannot be competitive. The average capacity in League 1, where the Club will be playing next season, is 14,700, rising to 27,500 in the Championship where the average attendance is over 17,000.
- 4.3 Whilst the ground may have the capacity to accommodate its current crowds, it quite simply could not accommodate the football success the Club craves (and so nearly achieved this year) within the Championship league. In January and April 2013, the Club twice sold out the full capacity of Griffin Park with crowds of over 12,000.
- 4.4 Coupled with Griffin Park's restricted capacity is the inadequacy of its facilities. These include:
- Virtually no accommodation for match day hospitality, either for individual spectators or corporate entertainment;
 - Inadequate and poor toilet and concourse facilities;
 - A lack of attractive facilities and space for non-match day activities;
 - Wholly inadequate club and ground management accommodation; and
 - Equally inadequate facilities to accommodate the Club's community facilities, in particular those for the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust and the Learning Zone.
- 4.5 For all these reasons, to deliver its sustainable future, the Club must move to a well-located, purpose-built new stadium.

5.0 THE PROJECT VISION

5.1 The vision is to:

- Provide a modern, good quality, 20,000 capacity stadium for first class, professional football and rugby with potential to generate income to secure the long-term sustainability of Brentford Football Club;
- Provide a social focal point with a buzz of activity;
- Enable the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust to provide a range of activities that will:
 - Attract all age groups from all sections of the local communities; and
 - Promote sport, health, education, employment and training, social enterprise and social inclusion.
- Assist in the regeneration of the area and build close links with local businesses and residents.

5.2 The Club started its search for a new ground nearly 15 years ago. Over that time, a raft of opportunities has been identified and assessed, both by the Club alone and in conjunction with the London Borough of Hounslow.

5.3 Each time such searches were undertaken, one site has been identified as the best location, namely the industrial site to the east of Lionel Road South adjacent to Kew Bridge Station in the east of Brentford. As well as being the best site, it has been the only deliverable site to emerge from the relocation studies that have been undertaken.

5.4 The Club started trying to secure an interest in the Lionel Road South site in 2002. In 2008, in the context of a joint venture with the Club, Barratt Homes purchased the land and began to promote its development with a new Community Stadium associated with enabling residential development in the form of tall towers to fund the stadium construction. With the onset of the recession, the Barratt interest waned and ultimately the Club was able to buy the site itself in June 2012.

5.5 The Club's vision and its commitment to the local community is clearly demonstrated within the Community Benefit Statement.

6.0 THE LOCATION

6.1 The site is ideally located for stadium use.

6.2 It has excellent public transport connectivity in the form of:

- Being adjacent to Kew Bridge Railway Station;

- For football supporters, being within easy walking distance of Gunnersbury, Chiswick Park, Action Town, South Ealing, and Brentford overground and underground stations;
 - In a location well served by buses,
 - In a strategic highway location close to the A4/M4 route between Central London, Heathrow, the M25 and the West and the confluence of the North and South Circular routes.
- 6.3 The site is in an existing industrial area with its immediate neighbours being railway lines and commercial premises. There are no existing residential properties in its immediate vicinity.
- 6.4 Residential areas are not far away to the east/south east and west, but in each instance they are separated from the site by either major road or railway infrastructure.
- 6.5 It is recognised that the site is in close proximity to a number of important listed buildings and designated conservation areas, as well as two important open spaces, Kew Gardens (a World Heritage Site) and Gunnersbury Park (a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden). The presence of these designations will inform the assessment of any proposals to develop the site.

7.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 7.1 The proposal is to develop a new Community Stadium on the Lionel Road South site comprising:
- Accommodation for 20,000 spectators, including specific, easy access provision for disabled spectators;
 - A covered single and two tier arena;
 - A pitch large enough for both football and rugby, and capable of hosting international matches;
 - Hospitality accommodation for spectators in lounges, bars and hospitality boxes also capable of being used for conference, banqueting and other events on non-match days;
 - Parking for both match day and non-match day uses;
 - Indoor recreation facilities, including a climbing wall;
 - Provision of accommodation for the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, the Learning Zone and Hounslow's Interim Education Centre;

- Management and other accommodation for Brentford Football Club; and
- Management accommodation for a professional rugby club, together with its community team.

7.2 Beyond the Community Stadium itself, the proposals include:

- An external concourse to the Community Stadium;
- Improvements to Lionel Road South;
- Reopening of an existing pedestrian underpass beneath Lionel Road South to the eastbound platform of Kew Bridge Station and the construction of a new link from that underpass to the Community Stadium external concourse; and
- The construction of a new pedestrian and vehicular bridge over the railway line to the east linking the Community Stadium to Capital Interchange Way (necessary to serve a 20,000 capacity stadium).

7.3 A Community Stadium of the size proposed is necessary to accommodate the desired and anticipated crowds following promotion of the Club to the Championship. The revenue generated from this size of crowd is an important ingredient in the Club's sustainable business plan.

7.4 Maximising the income from the visiting spectators through match day bar, restaurant and retail facilities is also very important. So too is being able to generate income from non-match days by using the Community Stadium accommodation for conferences, banqueting and the like.

7.5 However, these incomes alone are nowhere near adequate to fund the initial construction of the Community Stadium. While the Club has the ability to fund a significant proportion of this cost, through the financial support of its benefactor, enabling residential development to generate capital receipts is a key component.

7.6 To generate such capital receipts, the Club proposes enabling residential development on surplus land around the Community Stadium. Whilst the Community Stadium has been designed in detail, outline proposals have been evolved for such residential proposals. The capital receipts from these residential sites will be supplemented by the sale of the existing Griffin Park site which already benefits from a residential planning permission.

7.7 The outline proposals also include a hotel immediately to the west of the Community Stadium. Such a hotel is of limited capital value to the overall scheme but it will serve visitors to the Community Stadium both for sporting fixtures and non-match day activity. The hotel will also be able to serve the wider area and the cluster of visitor attractions such as Kew Gardens, Gunnersbury Park and the Steam Museum that are in the immediate vicinity.

- 7.8 Up to 910 residential units are proposed in various buildings up to 61 metres in height. Detailed design of the residential accommodation is to be guided by a Design Code.
- 7.9 In order to keep the enabling development as low as possible, the Club has sought to acquire additional land adjacent to the Lionel Road South site purchased by the Club in 2012. As a result, comprehensive redevelopment of the area is proposed to the benefit of its wider regeneration.
- 7.10 A key element of the proposals is the public realm. As well as the Community Stadium concourse and the external areas associated with the residential development, the proposals are to substantially upgrade Lionel Road South and to improve the pedestrian linkages to Gunnersbury Park to the north. High quality hard and soft landscaping is proposed as appropriate within the areas of both public and private realm.
- 7.11 A masterplan approach has been used for the whole development which will optimise the benefits for the Club, both in terms of the Community Stadium and the enabling residential development.

8.0 THE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Development on this scale will always have consequences wherever it is proposed. The implications will be numerous and both positive and negative.
- 8.2 Informed by feedback to the extensive consultation exercise the Club has undertaken, the following three principal issues have been identified – transport/traffic, the scale of the enabling development and community impacts.

Transport/Traffic

- 8.3 For the reasons identified above, the Community Stadium is ideally located for its purpose. Immediate railway access is available at Kew Bridge Railway Station, as is convenient access to other overground railway and underground stations. The area is served by an extensive bus network and the site has very good access to the strategic highway routes in the area.
- 8.4 Accommodating up to 20,000 spectators will require careful management. The Club recognises its responsibility in this regard and will work closely with the police and other relevant authorities to ensure effective crowd management.
- 8.5 Of course, use of the Community Stadium for sporting events will not be a continuous occurrence with, even allowing for ground sharing with a rugby club, probably no more than a maximum of 45-50 matches a year taking place in the new Community

Stadium, the vast majority of which will be at weekends. Beyond that, the impact of visiting supporters is for a relatively short period of time immediately before and after a fixture and, with the careful management envisaged, it is not considered that crowd impact will be particularly problematic.

- 8.6 Whilst a key element of the proposals is use of the Community Stadium on non-match days, the intensity of that use will be relatively low for the urban area in which the site is located. In a similar vein, the site and its location are more than capable of accommodating the transport and traffic implications of the enabling residential development.
- 8.7 An important positive consequence of the proposals is the improvement to the public realm identified above. This will greatly improve the pedestrian and cycle connectivity in the area, in particular enhancing the links between the River Thames, Kew Bridge and Kew Green/Gardens to the south and Gunnersbury Park to the north.

Scale of Development

- 8.8 In the context of the site, the built scale of the Community Stadium is not excessive. It has a maximum equivalent height of about 10 storeys and fits comfortably within its immediate setting and that of the wider surrounding area.
- 8.9 The enabling residential development is greater in scale. From the Club's point of view, this is driven by the need to maximise the capital receipt from the residential development sites to contribute as much as possible to the cost of the new Community Stadium. There will be a significant shortfall, but for the project to be deliverable this needs to be minimised as far as possible.
- 8.10 That said, an equally important consideration is the capacity of the area to absorb the scale of the enabling development proposed. This raises considerations of visual impact on sensitive locations, including residential areas and townscape views, and on designated heritage assets such as the Pump House Tower at to the nearby Steam Museum, Kew Bridge Railway Station buildings, Kew Gardens and Kew Palace and Gunnersbury Park.
- 8.11 The approach that has been adopted has been to assess the townscape and visual impact of the proposed enabling development, particularly in terms of the cultural heritage of the area, very carefully. This exercise, reinforced by the public consultation responses, drove a decision by the Club in April 2013 to reduce the height of the proposed enabling development.
- 8.12 As a consequence, a design solution has been arrived that is considered wholly acceptable in planning terms relative to the considerations identified above, and that maximises the capital receipts that will help the Club fund the overall project. In other

words, the Club believes that it has achieved an appropriate and acceptable balance with the scale of the enabling development fully respecting the location and optimising the viability of the project.

Community Impact

- 8.13 The positive community impacts are very significant.
- 8.14 The Club's community activity, focused around the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, is very important and exemplary. Providing appropriate accommodation for the Trust's activities (and the Learning Zone) will allow the Club to increase its community work to another level benefiting Brentford, Hounslow and West London generally.
- 8.15 In addition to the community benefit, the development of the new Community Stadium proposed and its use by Brentford Football Club, and potentially a Premiership rugby club, will significantly assist the local economy. This will be through increased employment and spending by both the Club itself and supporters coming to the new Community Stadium.
- 8.16 The Community Stadium will also be available for other non-Club community uses. As well as providing new accommodation for Hounslow's Interim Education Centre, space will be available for various recreation functions and other community activities. The Club also has wider manpower and skills' resources that can contribute to local community initiatives.
- 8.17 Because of the challenging viability of the overall project, its potential to make direct financial contributions to local community infrastructure is limited. However, to ensure that appropriate financial contributions are made if at all possible, the Club has agreed with the London Borough of Hounslow that the project should be the subject of an "open-book" viability assessment. If, at its outturn, the project has generated sufficient receipts to cover the Community Stadium development costs, a proportion of the additional receipts will be ploughed back into community initiatives, particularly in the sphere of education and affordable housing.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.18 The proposals raise a raft of other considerations that have been carefully and fully assessed. It is not the purpose of this Overview to consider these in detail, but the additional considerations include:
- Displacement of existing uses;
 - Sustainability;
 - The type and quality of residential development proposed;

- The impact on:
 - Air quality;
 - Noise and vibration;
 - Archaeology;
 - Water resources;
 - Soil conditions, ground water and contamination;
 - Microclimate

8.19 Each of these issues is examined in depth in the documents that comprise and accompany the planning application. As required by statute, this is done in the context of the relevant adopted planning policies for the area and other planning guidance and relevant material considerations.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 Providing a new Community Stadium for Brentford Football Club and the activities of the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust is vital to secure the Club's sustainable, long-term future. Residential enabling development of surplus land around the Community Stadium is equally vital to contribute to the funding of the Community Stadium and the delivery of its significant community and economic benefits.

9.2 Any development of this scale will have consequences and impacts. In this instance, the principal ones relate to transport/traffic, the scale of the development and the ability of the community infrastructure to support the proposals. In addition, there are other impacts that need to be assessed. Overall, with respect to each of these matters, the Community Stadium proposals are considered to be acceptable.

9.3 None of these impacts should ultimately tell against the application proposals being approved. These are clearly proposals that will provide sustainable development together with very significant community and economic benefits, and for all the reasons set out in the application documents, the proposals should be granted planning permission.