

Lionel Road Liaison Group

Notes of 9 March 2009 meeting

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Attendees:

- Steve Lancashire (SL), chair
- Brian Burgess (BB)
- Peter Murphy (PMU)
- Chris Gammon (CG)
- Sanjay Sharma (SS)
- Cllr Andrew Dakers (AD)
- Peter Ladhams (PL)
- John Simnett (JS)
- Peter Hughes (PH)
- Donald Kerr (DK)
- Bela Cunha (BC)
- Terry Thorn (TT)
- Sara Ward (SW)
- Phil Marchant (PM)
- Sally Smith (SSM)
- Lucy Trench (LT)
- Andy Miller (AM)
- Janet Burrow (JB)
- John Burrow (JBW)
- Matthew Rockel (MR)
- Barbara Kuszell (BK)
- Ivor Morrison (IM)
- David Hughes (DH)
- Emma Cable, notes

Welcome and apologies:

SL: Welcomed all present to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves.

Apologies had been received from Dorothy Boland, Robert Colvill, Steve Curran, Councillors Matt Harmer, Ruth Cadbury and Julia Dabrowska, Andresz Kuszell, Tim Lockett, Inspector Steven Edwards, Sonja Leadlay and Mike Simson.

The group was then shown a short DVD that outlined the work and elements of the Football Club.

Panel discussion:

CG: Began by showing some slides that displayed the key issues outlining the Club's needs and the wider benefits that the stadium will bring to Brentford. The slides highlighted that the club's overall sustainability is questionable if they remain at Griffin Park.

TT: The West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society supported the development of the Moran Hotel at the end of their road. However, Hounslow Council refused planning permission because they believed there was not enough demand for hotels in the area. Also, if the development goes ahead there should be pricing policy for the leisure centre facilities for should be similar to that currently found at the Fountains Leisure Centre.

AD: Asked for thoughts on what opportunities there were for the club to reach the wider community and bring broader economic development to the area.

LT: Queried whether the group could be certain that local businesses would not be affected when new retail space comes as part of the development.

JS: If the Brentford area is developed, it will bring more competition, which is better for the area.

PH: If an area has a theme, it works to its advantage. The development could be used to bring a theme to Brentford.

TT: The group needs to recognise that Hounslow Council sees Brentford as the main town centre in their Town Centre policy paper. This is contrary to the views of the potential developer.

CG: The Council wants to minimize the impact of new hotels and retailers on the High Street. Lionel Road will not become a major retail site. Our plans include some retail on the ground floor of the Fountains site.

SSM: There are an awful lot of hotel developments taking place at the moment.

CG: A number of hotel providers have been in touch expressing interest in running the hotel and external consultants have also confirmed that demand exists.

IM: Asked how far the development had progressed in getting planning permission.

SL: It is hoped that an application for outline planning permission will be submitted in the summer.

JB: Asked if the council had accepted the proposed stadium location. Also asked if the business plan for the whole development will be made available, particularly so the estimated income generated from concerts at the stadium can be reviewed. Expressed uncertainty regarding the proposed high seating capacity of the new stadium.

CG: There will be an increase in capacity as Brentford has previously had bigger crowds when it was in a higher league. Having less seating capacity, such as 10,000 seats, limits our ambition. There needs to be scope for the club to grow and develop. The business plan indicates that one concert per year will be held at the stadium. We cannot release all the information in the business plan as much is commercially sensitive but we will consider what highlights can be shared and how best to do that.

AD: It is very probable there will be a condition on the number of concerts permitted in any planning approval granted. Within the Brentford Area Action Plan (BAAP), the council has supported in principle the Lionel Road site as the proposed stadium site. It would help to have a bit more information on the leisure and retail element, as new bars and restaurants could potentially have a negative impact upon existing pubs. Has an impact assessment been done?

PH: Current pub owners could be offered units on the new site.

TT: There is an application to close one pub as part of the Scottish Widows site, if this does happen the pub will be moved onto the riverside.

JB: Told the group that she had not been consulted by the Council on the BAAP.

TT: Stated that JB lives in the area most likely covered under the Chiswick Action Plan, instead of BAAP.

MR: Believes that this very ambitious project will only work if there is total transparency but he felt that currently some things have been slightly muddled. It does not sound like a lot of thought and research has gone into the viability of the whole scheme, especially with regard to the large seating capacity at the stadium.

CG: It is important to distinguish between capital and revenue income. It is expected that the developer will negotiate sales/transfers of the housing, hotel, leisure and any retail facilities to appropriate providers. The club will generate income from the conference and catering facilities, the business centre, Primary Care Trust and stadium advertising. The club currently has an agreement with Barratt Homes that provides a community asset lock on the site.

PM: A lot of the set-up costs for the stadium would be the same no matter how large the seating capacity was. If a small stadium was built and the club wanted to expand, the cost would be much greater.

BK: Queried whether there was a law stating that tenants can buy out the leasehold on their properties after five years.

MR: Leaseholds are often protected in mixed-use developments such as this.

TT: It is important to note the proximity of Wellesley Road and other Conservation Areas.

JB: It appears there are no pubs north of the site and that all travelers will be directed south and this will have an impact on the Strand on the Green Conservation Area.

SW: It is good to see local people watching local football matches and that it would be sad if the pubs they like to do this in close down.

TT: Stated that Gunnersbury station is a very popular route into the area as it is on the Underground and that there are two big pubs near the station.

IM: Disagreed with TT regarding Gunnersbury station, stating that Kew Bridge station is closer to the ground and will be well-used.

CG: Stated that a lot of supporters will still want to use their current pub but may want to move to a pub on the development at a later date.

JB: Emphasised that the group needed to see the broader picture and not focus on minor issues.

CG: Told the group that there will be different offers in order to attract fans to eat and drink within the stadium.

AD: Asked what opportunities there were for the club to market the town centre. JS: Stated that there needs to be a move towards developing Brentford, as hotels in the area do not always advertise local amenities because of corporate deals, the 20,000-seat stadium will help to establish Brentford's identity.

SSM: The stadium will get Brentford onto the map and bring more cohesion to the area.

PH: Stated that people outside Brentford view it as run-down, even though a lot of regeneration work has been taking place in the area. The reasons that the High Street is in a poor state include incompetent landlords and the fact that the council is taking a lot of money from tenants.

JB: This development must ensure that the road system works, especially in the Kew Bridge area.

SL: The road system was discussed in detail at the last meeting and was sure this would be given careful attention.

IM: Queried whether any other sites for the stadium had seriously been considered.

BB: Explained that there have been a lot of studies over a twenty-year period. The council gave planning permission for the Griffin Park site to be extended but studies indicated this is not viable because of the close proximity to houses. People have seen the success of other clubs that have built new stadia and have risen through the leagues. When we tried to buy Lionel Road five years ago, there was a list of six other sites that we submitted to the Council for advice. The Council did not want the club to consider building on any of them as they felt that Lionel Road was superior. Barratt now own the site and have an agreement with the club.

AD: The council has £18,000 to improve the marketing of the town. We need one brand identity for Brentford.

JB: Given the club is currently in deficit, with a loan from the council, what happens if the club stays in deficit?

CG: The club needs wealthy backers and supporters like other clubs. We want to move away from the current hand-to-mouth existence. Whilst there is no guarantee of success there will be a structure in place to underpin long-term sustainability.

JB: The club is going to remain in the old stadium for five years, then move to a new stadium that may not be fully occupied. Is this viable?

CG: Explained that most new stadia are successful in increasing income, with 30-40% more crowds as well as new sources of revenue. We are already in discussion with key tenants, with the intention that these tenants will be paying rent from day one.

PH: The only certainty is that the club will fail if they stay where they are now.

PM: The construction period for this project will be in two phases and span 5/6 years. He estimated that costs will be £350 – 400 million and, although there will be a need for some specialist firms, he felt there will be opportunities for local businesses and workers.

LT: Concerned about traffic movement and queried whether there will be a presentation from an expert.

BB: Stated that there have been two presentations at previous meetings but there is still more work to be done regarding traffic.

TT: This area has three Conservation Zones, therefore the group needs to discuss the impact of the whole development upon conservation areas. Also stated uncertainty regarding the number and size of residential units.

SL: Informed the group that design and conservation issues are the topic for the next meeting.

PM: Stated that there will be 1200 residential units of varying sizes, details of which can be found on the website www.brentfordcommunitystadium.com

Notes of 9th February meeting:

Notes agreed.

Matters arising:

SW: Asked if copies of the DVD shown at the beginning of the meeting would be available.

SL: He hoped this will be available on the website.

TT: Informed the group that the only changes TfL plan to Gunnersbury station is a bigger ticket area.

SL: He felt these debates are about to be re-opened

SL: Stated that any of the representatives should approach him and say if they would like a meeting with their group. Also, there will be a general public exhibition and newsletter at an appropriate time, although the timing is still under discussion. He also acknowledged that design and architecture had also been agreed as a topic. He had taken a decision to split the topics up and he proposed there be a panel discussion on design and architecture.

Any other business:

No further items were raised.

Date of next meeting:

SL: As the scheduled date of the next meeting was Easter Monday, he raised the question of date and venue of the next meeting and suggested it might be on a different day of the week.

After discussion on options and taking straw polls, including the views of those who had apologised but suggested dates in April, the date of the next meeting was agreed as **Tuesday 21st April between the times of 7pm and 9pm**. The Music Museum was suggested as the venue to approach, although members will need to check the agenda nearer the time as this could not be confirmed.