

Lionel Road Liaison Group

Notes of 14 September 2009 Meeting

September 2009

Attendees

- Steve Lancashire (SL), chair
- Brian Burgess (BB)
- Chris Gammon (CG)
- Sanjay Sharma (SS)
- Stephen Kendall (SK)
- Matthew Rea (MR)
- Peter Ladhams (PLa)
- Inspector Steve Edwards (SE)
- Mike Simson (MS)
- Tim Lockett (TL)
- Phil Marchant (PhM)
- Cllr Felicity Barwood (FB)
- Peter Hughes (PH)
- Janet Burrow (JB)
- Janet Prendiville (JP)
- Kate Sully (KS)
- Syd Wilcox (SW)
- Sonja Leadlay (SLe)
- Dorothy Boland (DB)
- Paul Lewis (PL)
- Gisele le Moaligou (GIM)
- Tom Bell, notes

Welcome and apologies

SL welcomed all present to the meeting, particularly those attending for the first time, and invited them to introduce themselves. Apologies were received from Councillors Harmer, Cadbury, Dakers, Hearn and Lynch and also from Bela Cunha, Terence Thorn, Chris Newman.

He proposed to the meeting that the main item involve three update reports as follows and that there would be an opportunity for questions and discussions after each.

SK – on the development and application progress

BB – Brentford FC activities

SL – on local consultation activities

The meeting accepted this approach.

Scheme Update

SK – Barratt Homes have undergone a review of the project following the economic and housing market downturn. Projected revenue and costs have been revisited and the current position is there is still a financial gap that will delay the project.

There will need to be a 10% recovery in the market for the scheme to be viable.

Barratt Homes remain committed to the project and plan to review it on a quarterly basis – the next review will take place in December. If it is considered viable then, a planning application will come forward in Summer/Autumn 2010. In effect the project is stalled.

PL – Does the recovery of 10% need to be from present market conditions?

SK – Needs to be a recovery of 10% in the market or we have to revise our profit aspirations.

PH – How much has the market declined?

SK – Approximately 20%

JB – Do you own the land?

SK – Yes we do. The property is let and achieving an income.

JB – Are you incurring a loss?

SS – Probably a small loss. The lifespan of the project is 5 years. Over that time we expect the market to recover.

MS – Are you still looking at a 20,000 seat stadium?

JB – Are you still proposing tower blocks for residential?

SS – The scheme has not fundamentally changed.

JB – If the towers are not agreed to do you then reconsider viability?

PL – You seem to be much further away than the reported 7-8 months (from beginning of 2010 if viable) from a planning application.

SK – We expect it to take 9 months to do appropriate consultations and preparation of the planning application.

PL – Would you have to submit an outline application with no detail?

PLa – We already have lots of the background information and have undertaken some initial background assessments. We believe would be able to submit an application in 9 months.

PH – Will you want to finish the Great Western Quarter first before progressing with this scheme?

SK – We are looking at 3 years plus before delivery

DB – Is the application on Griffin Park time limited?

BB – Yes. It runs to 2011. It will be a 3 year program to build Lionel Rd stadium. Only then will the football club move to Griffin Park.

PL – 3 years just for the stadium?

BB – 3 years refers to the current stadium design and housing development on the Lionel Road site. Including Griffin Park and Fountains sites, the development will take 5 years in total. It is a hybrid application at the moment to establish the principle of development. We have been speaking to stakeholders and consulting for 18 months. Lots of groundwork has been done looking at the issues and considering solutions.

JB – What's the status of the area masterplan?

SL – I've not heard anything further from Cllr Cadbury about the Brentford Area Action Plan. I will speak to Cllr Cadbury.

PL – If the market rises by 10% you will take a view that the market will continue to rise?

SK – Yes.

SL – I think it is called risk. We will clarify it for the note.

JB – Where are we with the proposed meeting between the Council and Transport for London regarding traffic problems on Kew Bridge and in the area?

SL – Cllr Dubrowska raised this previously. We are planning to ask the Council to invite us to an event with TfL at an appropriate time to discuss the issues.

Brentford Football Club (BFC) progress

BB – the Football Club is looking for a sustainable stadium that is both profitable and a good neighbour. Under the current proposals housing pays for the stadium. We have been looking into other funding options for the last 6 months but at present there is no other way.

The investigations into reducing the burden on residential funding the stadium have included

- Hotel – talking to operators but it doesn't fill the gap.
- Government funding – some programs might help e.g. 2018 World Cup legacy for London Football Clubs.
- NHS – spoken to Hounslow, Ealing and Richmond Primary Care Trusts to discuss their priorities
- Similar discussions with educational providers – Thames Valley, Brunel University.
- Care home providers.
- London Welsh Rugby Football Club – since meeting them they have gone into administration so are no longer interested. However, sharing with a RFC is still an intention.

GLM – Are BFC broke at the moment? You have just received £1m from an individual. Is BFC going to be out of its depth with the new stadium, especially if you are relegated?

CG – The fortunes of BFC fluctuate. On average BFC has lost £500,000 per year in recent times. This shortfall has traditionally been covered by loan funds, but BFC can no longer borrow, so we needed to find an equity deal. A deal has been agreed in principle, with 99% of the trust members in favour. The new funding will be in the form of preference shares from a long-term supporter who has previously provided loans. It is a £5m deal (£1m a year for 5 years). It is hoped this will get us to the new stadium.

PL – Will he own the club?

CG – The details of the deal are on the Football Club and Bees United websites. Initially, he will receive a minority stake. At the end of the 5 years there are three options – the trust has the option to buy back the stake, the supporter can increase his stake, or it is possible the status quo will be maintained.

PL – So in 5 years he could own the club and stadium for £5million?

BB – No – if he exercised his option it would cost more than £5m and ownership would be subject to a golden share held by Bees United which would give a right of veto over the sale of the developed stadium.

CG – We still have to work out whether the stadium ownership will be via a freehold or leasehold interest or if a special stadium management company will be set up. We need to

ensure there is a 'community asset lock' to block an asset strip. The freehold of the site is with Barratt Homes at the moment. It is likely that the freehold of the site will transfer to the club or a special trust that will be set up to hold the freehold. The options for the governance structure are being investigated.

TL – Will the borough have an interest in the site?

CG – Yes, the leisure centre is likely to be on a long lease. The residential units will probably have 155 year leases.

PH – At an earlier meeting we talked about the rotunda structure in the middle of Griffin Park. There seemed to be a covenant on the site regarding provision of green space the size of a football pitch.

BB – This is possibly a confusion between two separate things. The site was originally donated to Brentford Football Club by Fullers, who may retain some influence over a small section. Separately the Section 106 agreement with the existing outline planning consent for residential development includes provision for the retention of green space. This and some other provisions can be revisited if a planning application is submitted that meets the requirements for a replacement stadium. The Lionel Road pitch would replace the Griffin Park pitch and the design for housing would include some green space on the Griffin Park site.

JB – Presumably the green space required through a section 106 is linked to the need of the area.

FB – Planning consent is reliant on a new site being found before Griffin Park can be developed.

FB – Hounslow Council own the leisure centre. What are we getting out of a leasehold of the leisure centre?

BB – It will be a new centre based on the requirements of the Council and their operator.

FB - The Council is investing in Fountains already. All investments in leisure centres are done with 15 year leases.

BB – That is not my understanding in discussions that I have had with the council.

PL – I'm completely at a loss over timing. I don't understand the dates.

SL – I will see a timeline is put in the notes as an appendix.

SW – Presumably the council own the freehold of the present leisure centre. Why can't they get the freehold of the proposed centre? Any rent charged should be peppercorn.

BB – All the points you have raised will be at the discretion of the council. At the moment, the leisure centre costs the council money. By replacing it with a modern building it would reduce costs and the burden on council tax payers.

DB – Is there a swimming pool in the new centre?

BB – There has always been a swimming pool in the proposals, but not a wave pool or slide.

SW – Fountains is a public facility. It shouldn't make a profit.

SL – I think the point is about lessening liability on the council taxpayer rather than profit.

PL – Have you taken into account the loss of revenue by turning a children's pool into a serious sports centre?

BB – The council are telling us their requirements.

SS – In principle the proposals reflect what the council wants

PH – is a future partnership with London Welsh RFC totally ruled out?

BB – That’s our understanding.

PH – Are there any reason why two football clubs can’t share?

CG – There are a number of emotional reasons. There isn’t huge support for this with the fans.

PH – So it is emotional rather than practical.

BB – There are business reasons. RFC supporters are a different customer base and spend more money and therefore help to make it more sustainable. When you share a football ground with another football club many future fans are attracted to the bigger, more successful club, which makes it unattractive for the smaller club. Fortunately, Lionel Rd would be too small for Fulham or QPR.

PL – So, without a RFC the stadium doesn’t work?

BB – It makes it more difficult, but it can still work, depending on what other revenue generating facilities are with it.

Local Consultation Activities

SL – Since the last meeting the following activities and meetings have been attended:

West Chiswick & Gunnersbury Park Society (AGM), St Margaret’s Fair, Chiswick Fair, Brentford Festival, the Sports Jam in Gunnersbury Park and the project team will be presenting to the Green Dragon Lane residents group in early October.

TL – What was the feedback you received at these events?

SL – At the festival events the feedback was very positive. A further 4-500 brochures were distributed and we are beginning to build a database from the feedback forms received.

FB – There was talk of a Hub in Gunnersbury Park and Boston Manor Park.

SL – We have met with the Gunnersbury Park manager a number of times and have been talking through possibilities.

BB – Gunnersbury Park – the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust (a charity) did a feasibility study for the council a few years ago on the potential for a multi-sports hub to regenerate the sports facilities in the park. This has now been passed to the consultants looking at the wider regeneration of the whole of the park and its buildings. The Community Sports Trust would be keen to operate the sports facilities there.

TL – There is nothing going on with Boston Manor.

BB – What is the situation with Glaxo Smith Kline car parking, which was muted as an enabler for the regeneration of Boston Manor park and house?

FB – My understanding is that a deal is soon to happen this.

SLe – Was the enthusiasm at the festivals for the football stadium or the whole scheme?

SL – Mainly for the stadium and related facilities. There were also some comments on the ‘tiredness’ of Fountains.

BB – We have made the residential elements clear through the pictures but people might not have taken that on board.

SLe – It seems to me that everything hinges on TfL.

SL – One of the major issues is transport and conversations are ongoing. We hope that early 2010 would be an appropriate time for the Council to approach TfL.

DB – It is not just traffic, it is the station as well.

SL – That’s Network Rail’s responsibility.

DB – Are you still talking about a transport hub?

SL – Yes.

MS – The transport proposals are on the website and downloadable.

Notes of Previous Meeting

Notes agreed.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Any Other Business

No further items were raised.

Date of next meeting

The date will be 18th January between the times of 7pm and 9pm. SL advised he would sort out a venue and put the full address on the agenda.

Appendix: outline time line

The dates below have been provided by SK after the meeting. This assumes a positive viability test by Barratt Homes at the end of this year.

January – September 2010: prepare outline planning application

October 2010: - Submit outline planning application

March 2011: - Receive outline planning permission

April – June 2011: - Negotiate Section 106

July 2011: – Sign Section 106

August – October 2011: – Judicial Review period

August – December 2011: – Reserved matters application

January 2012: – Start on site

From January 2012 – Develop Lionel Road/New stadium site (depending on the housing market demand the development period could be between 3 and 5 years)

After July 2014 – Develop Griffin Park/Fountains Leisure sites (start date dependant on completion of the new stadium and the development period, depending on the housing market demand, could be between 2 and 3 years)