

Lionel Road Liaison Group Meeting (LRLG) Minutes

23 August 2017, 7pm-9pm

Venue: London Museum of Water and Steam, Kew

Chair: Robert Gordon Clark, London Communications Agency

Project Team:

Brentford Football Club: Conor Hayes (CH), Cliff Crown (CC), Brian Burgess (BB), Alan Walsh, David Hayes, Sally Stephens

Be: Mathew Townend (MT), Gregor Mitchell (GM), Simon Chatfield

London Communications Agency: Robert Gordon Clark (RGC), Emma Crowe

Carter Jonas: Katy Davis (KD), Christopher Collett

AFL Architects: John Roberts (JR)

Broadway Malyan: Laura Cassullo (LC)

Arup – William Whitby

Wrenbridge Sport – Richard Arnold

Attendees:

Samantha Austyn – Westerly Ware Association

Dorothy Boland – Strand on the Green

Denis Browne – Brentford Community Council

Bela Cunha – Lionel Road North

Andrew Dakers – West London Business

Stephen Fry – Hounslow Chamber of Commerce and Hounslow Economic Business Forum

Richard Griffith – Strand on the Green

Susan Griffith – Strand on the Green

Mark Hudson – Kew House School

Dave Hughes – Dave Hughes Architects

Christine Hutchinson – Strand on the Green

Mark Ivory – Strand on the Green

Jonathan Knight – Grove Park Residents

Cllr Guy Lambert – Hounslow Council

Sonja Leadlay – Strand on the Green

Cate Lyon – Strand on the Green

Philip Marchant – BIAS

John Ormsby – West London River Group

Andy Park – Strand on the Green

Oliver Percy – London Museum of Water and Steam

Pearl Pelfre – Green Dragon Lane

Marie Rabouhans – West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society

Carole Richardson – Kew Bridge Residents

James Richardson – Kew Bridge Residents

Andrew Ross – Strand on the Grand

Cllr Myra Savin – Hounslow Council

Eve Scott – Strand on the Green

Luke Skelhorn – Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

Andy Ward – Brentford Community Council

1. Welcome & Introductions

Robert Gordon Clark (RGC), chair of the meeting welcomed everyone and introduced the project teams from Brentford FC, Be, Carter Jonas, AFL Architects and Broadway Malyan. There were no apologies given on the night. Ruth Cadbury MP sent apologies by e-mail as did Councillor John Todd and some other regular attendees.

2. Introductions – Conor Hayes (CH)

Conor Hayes (CH) introduced himself as the Chairman of Lionel Road Developments (LRD) and corporate adviser to Matthew Benham (MB) and provided a brief summary of his career as a Chartered Accountant for KPMG and running several businesses. He explained that he had been brought in by MB in 2016 to reduce the risk on the overall project and make it happen, in particular looking at the changes in the political, financial and technical standards landscape that have impacted the project since the original planning permission in June 2014. He has been working with Be and the project team to review the overall scheme to assess a number of factors including: optimal size for the stadium; mix of seats; future-proofing in relation to broadcast and technology; range of facilities required; and the best way to ensure robust construction and delivery. He stressed that the design changes improve the development but with no additional homes, no taller buildings and no new uses.

Introductions – Matthew Townend (MT)

ME introduced himself as the Managing Director of Be (the new name for the residential arm of Willmott Dixon). ME was appointed in May 2017 and his first priority was to review the Brentford Community Stadium development. From the outset he felt that the stadium and residential elements could work together better to improve the experience for people who live there as well as those visiting for sporting events at the stadium. The focus has been very much on the first phase of the development which includes the Central Eastern and Central Southern residential areas, along with the stadium (but not the Capital Court or Duffy sites). Key changes include introducing a new public square in Central Southern with commercial outlets on the ground floor to create a reason for people to visit and introducing more 'Build to Rent' homes in this phase as demand in this marketplace continues to grow. He explained that Be already have other sites with Build to Rent homes which open them up to a wider range of local residents. Approximately 80% of the residents on their other site earn less than £50k per year and 40% earn less than £35k.

3. Progress on site – Matthew Townend (MT)

MT confirmed that Be is currently progressing site clearance work on the Capital Court site. Trees and vegetation are being cleared this week and hoardings erected over the coming days and they are working with the Club, Network Rail and London Borough of Hounslow to get the relevant licences and plans in place to demolish the Capital Court building. RGC noted the fact that Mark Hudson, the head-teacher for Kew House School, was at the meeting and it was confirmed that they will be notified before work starts and RGC apologised in advance for the disruption this may cause.

ACTION: inform LRLG members at least a week in advance of any demolition work.

4. Overview of proposed planning amendments

Stadium proposed amendments

John Roberts (JR) of AFL Architects reviewed in turn the key proposed changes to the stadium:

- Reducing the capacity from 20,000 to 17,250
- Reducing the stadium footprint to introduce a new road along the northern perimeter
- Compressing the stadium 3m to the south (staying within the approved planning envelope)
- Converting the east and west stands to a single tier
- Lowering the roof form on the east and west stands
- Lowering the south stand by removing the top tier
- Providing more premium seats
- Making the stadium Premier League and Premiership Rugby compliant from day one by ensuring we have 1,500 sqm outside broadcast space and by enhancing the media and lighting facilities
- Relocating some of the community and other facilities outside the stadium itself

Q1: Is the road along the northern perimeter just an internal road? Is it just for pedestrians? Is it adopted or a private road?

A: The new road along the northern perimeter of the site is a private road that will be for both pedestrians and vehicles. Introducing the road helps to de-risk the construction process as it allows greater access on both sides. It also helps to open up the site once complete, providing a new route for residents to access the Central Eastern building as well as a new pedestrian route for both visitors to the stadium and the residential area. Service vehicles and emergency vehicles will now have access around the whole of the stadium.

Q2: Where will the new Lionel Road station be located?

A: London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) has referred to the potential for a new station on Lionel Road as part of its Local Plan and is currently undertaking a specific review of the Great West Corridor to feed into its Local Plan Review. The new station is part of LBH's aspirations for the Great West Corridor but at this stage its precise location has not been confirmed. The Brentford Community Stadium project does not jeopardise the potential for the station and the Club and Be are keen to continue working with LBH on this in due course.

Q3: What is the Club's ultimate capacity? Will you extend over the railway?

A: The plans being submitted in September 2017 are for a stadium with a capacity of 17,250 and we don't envisage extending this. There could be an option in the future to extend the stadium over the railway to increase the capacity to between 20,000 and 25,000 but it would be hugely expensive and would require a completely new planning application.

Q4: Is the link between the Brentford Community Stadium plans and the Golden Mile/Great West Corridor Local Plan Review on the agenda for the LBH Planning Development Presentation meeting on 24 August 2017?

A: The purpose of the presentation to the Planning Development Presentation on 24 August is to provide an overview of the proposed planning amendments for the Brentford Community Stadium development, due to be submitted in September. However, there is the opportunity for Councillors to ask wider questions and this may be one area of discussion.

Q5: In earlier presentations, it was stressed that a move from Griffin Park was needed to get to a capacity of 20,000. Why do you now only need 17,250? How will the lower capacity help to ensure the long term sustainability of the Club especially as you are taking away some of the revenue streams such as conference and events, Club shop and the pub?

A: The previous business model was based on a number of different revenue streams which did include a full scale conference and events business as part of the strategy to “sweat the asset”. During our review we considered in more detail the risks involved in operating in a new business area, together with the impact of the increased upfront capital and staffing costs. We concluded that, although there is the potential to deliver additional revenue from a full conference and events business, there is also considerable extra risk and no guarantees that this business will be profitable. At this stage we have decided to focus on the core of our business, playing football (and rugby). That is not to say that we won’t add a more significant conference and events element at a later stage but only when we are sure that this would be profitable and not a drain on the Club.

As part of our focus on the core business we have decided to dedicate some of the limited capital budget we have to spend on future-proofing the stadium to ensure that we have the latest in broadcast, media and lighting facilities to make us Premier League ready from day one. This keeps us ahead of the game in this area as we anticipate that, even within the Championship, requirements in this area will continue to develop.

At the moment a considerable proportion of Club Shop sales (around 40%) are online and we expect this percentage will continue to rise. The idea that a shop has to be ‘bricks and mortar’ is no longer valid. While we have not allocated a space for the Club Shop within the stadium itself we will definitely have lots of options available on matchdays for fans to buy their merchandise. If there is a business case for it in the future, we will also look at other options including possibly renting a space within the commercial area around the stadium or perhaps on Brentford High Street.

Similarly we have not allocated space in the stadium for a 7 day a week bar. In the previous design there was a 150 sqm space allowed for this. We have to prioritise where we spend our limited capital pot. However, on matchdays we will still have plenty of options available for fans to congregate and buy a wide range of food and drink within the stadium itself. There are also likely to be options available in the new public square area leading up to the stadium. It is in our interests to make the options available as attractive as possible as we want to encourage supporters to spend their money with us and bring them into the stadium both before and after matches.

Q6: With the technological improvements you are making can you ensure that there is a good mobile phone signal locally? Will you incorporate mobile phone masts within the stadium?

A: We are in the process of assessing the best way to provide the very best mobile coverage and also ensure the appropriate security levels. The options include having an internal stadium Wi-Fi network or delivering excellent 4G (or 5G) coverage.

ACTION: Review the latest thinking on mobile coverage at the next LRLG meeting.

Q7: There are apparently several Premier League Clubs that don’t have outside broadcast facilities like this, so is it really necessary?

A: Given that our site is so constrained, we believe that it is better to ‘design in’ these facilities from the outset rather than face the considerable extra expense that clubs like Brighton and others are now facing to retrofit their stadia to meet these requirements. If clubs can’t meet the requirements then they may have to negotiate with the Premier League and pay a fine. We’re better off trying to future proof now, particularly as these specifications are likely to apply to the Championship also in time. This design will also be fully compliant with camera positions and lighting.

Q8: How will Lionel Road South be able to cope with the articulated trucks and other vehicles that will use it? Why won't it be widened? Could it be closed?

A: During the early stages of this project we did work with LBH to assess all the various options with regard to Lionel Road South. There are considerable difficulties involved in widening the road as it becomes single lane as it goes over the railway bridge and widening this is prohibitively expensive so there is little value in widening the rest of the road. Our development does seek to alleviate some of the pressure on Lionel Road South by introducing a new bridge across to the development from Capital Interchange Way. We will also not expect much traffic to the stadium even on matchdays as there is very little parking available on site. Whilst we are in the Championship, there would only be a maximum of 2 articulated outside broadcast trucks arriving at the stadium (this could increase to up to 4 should we be promoted to the Premier League).

Q9: Given your forward thinking on the stadium and plans for promotion to the Premier League, what is the optimal size for the stadium? Is it really worth moving?

A: The optimal size is one that is close to being full. There are a wide range of capacities within the Premier League. Bournemouth AFC only has a capacity of around 11,500. Griffin Park currently has a capacity of 12,300, with a current average attendance of around 10,500. (**Note added after the meeting:** The capacity at Griffin Park would reduce to around 11,000 if we stay at the ground as we would need to convert our standing terraces to seating in line with current demands for all Championship Clubs).

At the moment we only have the ability to offer hospitality for around 45 people within Griffin Park. In the new stadium we hope to have around 2,900 premium seats which will attract some existing season ticket holders as well as new fans, sponsors and corporate guests. From our research of other new stadium openings, there is typically a 40% uplift in visitors so we are hoping for crowds of around 15,000 in the Championship at the new stadium.

Q10: Will you have more Away fans? How will this impact on Gunnersbury station?

A: There is a requirement for all stadia to offer 15% of the capacity to away fans for cup matches so we will need to provide for at least that at some matches – around 2,500. Currently at Griffin Park we have capacity for 1,650 away fans and we sell out for around two thirds of matches but some teams only bring less than 1,000 supporters.

Note added after the meeting: away fans will arrive via a number of different modes of transport including coaches, cars, trains and other public transport. Our Local Area Management Plan and Stadium Management Plan will cater for this and will manage the routes that away fans take to and from the stadium.

Q11: What impact will the enlarged floodlights have on local residents?

A: The floodlights are bigger and more powerful in the new stadium design, in line with Premier League requirements, but they are very specifically targeted on particular points on the pitch, with glare control on each LED lamp.

Q12: What is the impact of the changes on parking from these amendments? Will Brentford FC Community Sports Trust staff have allocated parking?

A: Limited parking for Brentford FC Community Sports Trust staff will be provided within the site as previously planned.

Q12: How will catering be provided in the stadium? Will more people end up drinking in the pubs on Strand on the Green?

A: We have a number of premium lounges which will be served by a main stadium kitchen within the south stand. There will also be a number of food and drinks outlets around the concourses and other matchday pop-up catering options. The only difference in the revised plans is the removal of a 150 sqm, 7 day a week bar. The other catering options envisaged in the original plans will still be provided. As mentioned in the answer to Q5, it is in our commercial best interests to encourage as many fans as we can to the ground to buy their food and drink in our outlets both before and after matches. We will be putting in place options that seek to achieve this. Currently Griffin Park is open 1 ½ hours before and after matches but only 45% of fans come through the turnstiles more than half an hour before the match kicks off. We will be looking to significantly increase this at the new stadium by providing TV screens to watch early and late kick-off matches and nicer areas to congregate. Rugby fans typically already arrive much earlier to matches and stay longer afterwards.

Q13: With the new stadium design will you be looking again at where you can incorporate solar panels?

A: Yes, we have already undertaken detailed solar studies and have identified 400sqm of roof space that will work for the solar Photovoltaic Panels (PV). This has not changed significantly as a result of the design changes.

Masterplan and residential proposed amendments

Laura Cassullo of Broadway Malyan presented the key changes to the residential elements. The main changes are:

- The creation of a new public square at Central Southern, to open up the concourse in front of the stadium and bring together the residential and stadium elements of the project
- Creating a clearer sense of arrival for both the residential and stadium areas
- Improving the residential aspects and visas by repositioning the building and redesigning the internal layouts
- Giving Brentford FC Community Sports Trust a dedicated position on the stadium concourse
- Improving the architectural design to make it more in keeping with local architecture
- Creating open vibrant spaces that people will want to visit and that provide an enhanced sense of place

Q14: How can this revised design improve vista and perspectives? Surely there will be a wind tunnel between them? Will you have more single aspect north facing homes?

A: The revised design increases the space between the buildings to reduce overlooking issues and vistas. Also the internal layouts have been significantly improved to place lift and stair cores in the spaces with a northern aspect or where there is the highest chance of overlooking. We have also extended corridors in some areas through to the end of building to bring in more natural light.

Q15: Will the impact of the changes, particularly on views locally, be provided in a full report?

A: Yes, we will be submitting a Section 73 variation to the original plans, together with a Reserved Matters Application for the residential changes and this will be accompanied by a full suite of documentation including a new Design and Access Statement and Environmental Statement Addendum.

Q16: Is this really more in keeping with local architecture?

There was some discussion at this point regarding what is meant by "local architecture" with varying views expressed.

Q17: How will the changes impact on the route from Kew Bridge station?

A: The route from Kew Bridge station will be significantly improved. The underpass will still be opened up as previously planned to enable passengers to exit the station directly onto the stadium development without the need to walk along the main road. However, fans heading to the stadium will now be brought up directly into the new public square area rather than having to walk along between the residential block and the railway line to get to the stadium. Fans will continue to be marshalled in line with the Stadium Management Plan which will be reviewed and approved prior to opening.

Q18: Will there be single aspect flats in the Central Southern area? Won't they be in permanent shadow with no privacy?

A: The distances between the buildings have been increased from the original designs and a Daylight and Sunlight assessment will be provided.

Q19: Do we really believe that there will be pedestrians walking along Lionel Road South – it's just not going to happen.

A: The improvements we are making to the junction with Lionel Road South mean that the distance to the new public square area has been reduced and we believe that we will be able to change the character and feel of the area to encourage people to visit.

Q20: Where is the private amenity space for residents in these blocks? Particularly given that the dedicated play area is within the Duffy site which won't be available for some time? Will people want to live here?

A: The plans submitted will outline the amenity space in line with our obligations. The first phase (before the main play area on the Duffy site is completed) will include a mix of balconies, roof terraces and internal residents' facilities. We believe that people want to live somewhere that is active and alive and we will be doing everything we can to achieve this.

Q21: Why are you only now considering how to enhance the enjoyment of living in this space?

A: We agree that this should have played a more prominent role to date but we have been necessarily occupied with finalising the land assembly and development agreements. Before the site was designed primarily for match days – now it will seek to work 365 days a year. This is a vital element of making this a successful development, with the stadium and residential elements working together to create a place that people want to both live and visit, in particular by changing what was a private courtyard for residents into a public square, with commercial units on the ground floor to increase the vibrancy.

Q22: Why don't you think you can operate commercial outlets successfully in the stadium itself? How many commercial outlets will there be?

A: We have decided at this stage not to operate a 7 day a week commercial outlet/pub within the stadium itself so that we can focus on the football (and rugby) business. There will be approximately 10,000sqft of commercial space within the first phase of the development which could include gyms, bars, restaurants and retail but the detail hasn't been confirmed at this stage.

Q23: What is LBH's position on the issue of Lionel Road South and the provision of playspace and green areas? It doesn't all have to be provided onsite.

Cllr Lambert expressed a personal preference for Lionel Road South to be closed or somehow reduce the traffic capacity so that the pedestrian and cycle routes can be improved – but this is not currently the position of LBH. He also agreed that greater use could be made of green spaces areas nearby but stated that some are difficult to access given the railway lines.

Q24: Can you provide the latest per hour commuter numbers (as requested as the last meeting).

A: Apologies for not providing this sooner – we will endeavour to get this information as soon as possible.

5. Next steps – Robert Gordon Clark (RGC)

The key events in the timetable of next steps are as follows:

- **24 August** – Planning Development Presentation with members of the Planning Committee at Hounslow Civic Centre from 7pm. Members of the public are able to attend.
- **26 August** – Fans Forum (organised by fans groups) 12.30pm till 2pm at St Paul's Church Hall, St Paul's Road, Brentford TW8 0PN
- **7 September** – Fans Forum (organised by Brentford FC) from 7-8.30pm in The Hive at Griffin Park
- **8 September** – target date to submit the variation to the original outline scheme and detailed reserved matters for Central Eastern and Central Southern.
- **September** – public exhibition to share more detail on the proposed planning amendments. The dates and venue(s) for this will be publicised in due course.
- **September** – meetings with local groups such as the Chiswick Area Forum (26 September), Isleworth & Brentford Area Forum (28 September) as requested
- **September/October** – demolition of the Capital Court building and ongoing site clearance and preparation work (up to the end of December)
- **7 December** – target date for Planning Committee consideration
- **Early 2018** – start work on the building of the stadium and Phase 1 residential areas
- **Summer 2019** – finalise the stadium build and secure necessary safety approvals
- **Late 2019 or early 2020** – stadium opens

ACTION: circulate a copy of the slides (or provide a link to these).

Subject to planning approval, it was suggested that we should hold another Lionel Road Liaison Group meeting before the main construction starts, with a focus on updating members on the Construction and Logistics Management Plan.