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Dear Ms Butler,

Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium – Site 37

We write on behalf of the Greyhound Racing Authority Acquisition Ltd and AFC Wimbledon to provide an updated position on our client's proposals for the redevelopment of the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium ("Site Proposal 37" within the emerging Sites and Policies Plan). This update is further to representations submitted on behalf of our client to various iterations of the Sites and Policies Plan with particular regard to the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium, and following the meeting with Merton Council on 2nd September 2013.

It is understood that the London Borough of Merton intends to submit their proposed Sites and Policies Plan DPD to the Secretary of State by 27th September 2013, and it was therefore requested that an update of the emerging proposals for the redevelopment of the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium site be provided to the Council in order to support this submission.

This letter accordingly sets out the detailed status of the current proposals. Summaries are included for the following issues which are provided in depth and detail within the individual reports:

- Vision;
- AFC Wimbledon;
- Site Selection;
- Development Partnership;
- Design;
- Environmental;
- Transport; and
- Socio-Economic Impact.

The supporting documents enclosed are the following:

- Business Plan – AFC Wimbledon
- Masterplan Design Report – Sheppard Robson
- Masterplan Drawings – Sheppard Robson/Derek Wilson Architects
- Stadium Proposal Report – Derek Wilson Architects

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- Transport and Highways Technical Note – Peter Brett Architects
- Flood Risk and Drainage Technical Note – Peter Brett Architects
- Economic Study – W2

Vision

The proposed re-development of the site is considered appropriate for the area and will confer significant benefits for the local and wider community. The relocation of a football stadium on the site will generate a significant number of full time and permanent jobs (pre and post-construction) and generate millions of pounds of supplier spending per annum, much of which will benefit the local area. Spending by home and away fans during visits to the new stadium will also generate significant spending per season for the local economy, boosting trade for local businesses. This is considered to be particularly important given the economic landscape.

It is proposed to provide a 1,000 sq m fitness club including squash courts and approximately 1,000 sq m of new retail space, both of which will serve the local community and contribute to the local economy and employment.

The scheme will also provide wider community benefits through a range of initiatives associated with the football club to include facilities and programmes such as coaching courses which promote sport to young people and the socially disadvantaged as an alternative to anti-social behaviour. Other facilities for the community such as the proposed retail store will benefit local residents. This reflects the NPPF's aspiration to "plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments."

A new residential population at this site will help meet housing need and directly support planned business and social infrastructure for existing and future communities. The site benefits from excellent access to a range of local employment opportunities to ensure that both current and future residents of the locality are able to access nearby employment opportunities leading to the creation of more sustainable live-work movement patterns.

The provision of a football stadium for AFC Wimbledon will represent a return of the club to their historic home after more than 20 years. The social benefits to the local community for generations to come should not be underestimated. Such a milestone will help to facilitate LB Merton's aspiration for regeneration and transformational change. This will assist in achieving the step change in the perception of the area required to facilitate much needed inward investment, in turn leading to better homes, local amenities and safer, more attractive and connected environments.

The landmark scheme represents a genuine "integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services" in accordance with the NPPF, that will deliver significant long term socio-economic and environmental benefits to the local community and wider borough.

Proposals

The proposals include the demolition of the existing buildings on site and comprehensive redevelopment to provide:

- A new stadium for AFC Wimbledon and associated facilities with a seating capacity of up to 20,000;
- Approximately 600 new residential units delivered by Galliard Homes;
- A new squash and fitness club comprising approximately 1,000 sq m;
- A new retail store comprising approximately 1,000 sq m of sales floor area;
- Appropriate car parking (approximately 350 spaces) and cycle parking;
- Functional servicing arrangements; and
- Landscaping.

It is the intention to submit a hybrid application with most of the proposal in detail. It is envisaged that this will provide the Council with sufficient comfort to be able to assess the application in detail but retain a degree of flexibility on elements to be delivered at a later stage.

In terms of various issues which will be detailed within the planning application, we set out an update of work undertaken to date and the proposed work prior to the submission of the application.

For ease of reference, we enclose an illustrative masterplan and 3D model providing details of the proposals.

Site Selection

The majority of land within the red line boundary within the Sites and Policies Plan has been assembled. Whilst there has been extensive discussion with Newridge, at this stage following a review of their development proposal, incorporation of their land interest was considered to be un-workable. The emerging scheme is being designed to neither blight development nor adversely affect the Rights of Light of Newridge's land. The Masterplan will demonstrate how this can be achieved. The preference remains however to deal with the site comprehensively and discussion with other landowners will continue. Alternatively the Council has the opportunity to consider use of its CPO powers.

AFC Wimbledon was founded in 2002 as a result of the decision for Wimbledon F.C.'s relocation to Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire by the Football Association; Wimbledon F.C. was subsequently renamed Milton Keynes Dons in 2004. The Wimbledon supporters who strongly opposed the idea of moving reacted by founding their own club, AFC Wimbledon. In view of its transplanting to Milton Keynes, the majority of Wimbledon fans felt that the original club no longer represented Wimbledon's legacy and traditions, and thus withdrew their support, choosing instead to start a new so-called 'phoenix club' from scratch.

It is AFC Wimbledon's long term ambition to relocate to a stadium with substantially greater capacity, in the London Borough of Merton where the original Wimbledon F.C. played at Plough Lane, their 'spiritual home' between 1912 and 1991. However, since the original Plough Lane was demolished in 2002 and later converted into a housing development, the club have instead expressed their strong desire to move to the Wimbledon Stadium site.

Independent consultants Colliers International identified a total of 18 potential sites in Merton which they evaluated and reported on in 2009. After further analysis and consultation, this list was reduced to three in a report issued by Colliers in August 2011.

Further detailed work was carried out to identify the individual merits and restrictions of each potential site, and in February 2013 Colliers issued their final report which concluded that the best site was the Greyhound Stadium. The Executive Summary contains the following conclusions:

“The Wimbledon Stadium location presents the best option for AFC Wimbledon and Merton to deliver a transformational regeneration project in the short to medium term. Strategic net benefits for Merton, AFC Wimbledon and a third party developer investor should include:

- Attractive commercial prospects and a relatively fast speed to market;
- A football stadium for AFC Wimbledon along with community uses to drive social cohesion and community building;
- New homes and community development that enable Merton to deliver quickly on the London housing agenda;
- Improvements to the physical environment of the wider area, better connections, an improved environment, better traffic management;
- A strong destination in the east of the borough; and
- Helping to refresh the wider Merton and Wimbledon place brand as a place to live, visit and invest.

There is also the substantial attraction of the massive positive publicity that would be generated by AFC Wimbledon coming home.”

Regarding the current use of the site, greyhound racing has decreased in popularity since the 1960s. This has been reflected in the closure of a number of tracks and decreasing track attendances. Since 2000 six National Greyhound Racing Club (NGRC) tracks have been closed down. The national average for attendance per greyhound race meet is in significant decline and greyhound tracks continue to be significantly under utilised, having also experienced a decline in revenues. Total attendance at Wimbledon fell from 214,424 in 2006 to 119,285 in 2011.

Development Partnership

AFC Wimbledon, the Greyhound Racing Authority Acquisition Ltd and Galliard Homes are working in close partnership to ensure the timely delivery of the proposals and significant background work has been undertaken which will be developed over the coming weeks to support a robust planning application.

As detailed in our submitted representations, Galliard Homes and AFC Wimbledon are actively engaged in developing design options and a memorandum of understanding/Heads of Terms have been agreed. Both parties are now keen to move forward quickly and progressively in collaboration with the Council.

Recognising the unique nature of this opportunity, the specialist nature of stadia design, urban context and character of the local area a professional team with appropriate skills and experience has been assembled to work in collaboration with the masterplan architects. This expert team has the requisite skill and experience of designing stadia and delivering significant regeneration projects.

Design

The Club’s brief to its stadium architect has focused on a stadium suitable for both football and rugby with good quality facilities that, wherever possible, have a dual use, i.e. they can generate income on both matchdays and non-matchdays and/or be suitable for community use. The Design Document prepared by

Sheppard Robson sets out the outline design proposal for the masterplan scheme, with proposals including the Volante site.

The key features of the stadium are:

- Visibility from Plough Lane, which reinforces its involvement in the local community;
- The total seating capacity as illustrated in the attached documents is currently in the region of 18,000, although the club have substantiated ambitions for 20,000;
- The spectators will be arranged in a bowl configuration which brings them as close to the playing surface as possible without compromising sightlines or run-off requirements;
- The pitch and stadium facilities meet all football and rugby playing requirements in terms of size, run-offs, etc. to allow competitive matches up to international level to be hosted;
- Sightlines from all areas meet or exceed the recommendations for viewing quality;
- Provision for disabled visitors allows access to all parts of the stadium;
- The hospitality provision comprises 1,200 seats adjacent to boxes/suites running along the West and South stands. In addition, there is a multi-functional space in the South West corner of the stadium footplate which provides a matchday bar for approximately 1,000 and which can be adapted for a range of non-matchday uses. The boxes/suites will also be used for non-matchday activities;
- Accommodation for matchday activities (changing rooms, police control room, etc.) as well as for day-to-day management of the Club;
- Parking has been kept to a minimum to encourage use of public transport. Space is provided for matchday broadcasting vehicles – this space can be used by visitors on non-matchdays.

The stadium will be constructed in a phased manner to allow the Club to maintain a balance between success on the pitch and the growing fanbase that will follow. At all times the objective is to maintain an environment which has a vibrant matchday atmosphere as well as an appeal for non-matchday use because of the quality and arrangement of its facilities. The initial construction will comprise the following:

- A capacity of 11,000 in four stands, using the space nearest the pitch. The design of the seating bowl will allow it to be completed in phases from this point and will take advantage of the availability of temporary structures which can now provide a high-quality solution to infill expansion space as necessary;
- The north-east corner construction will be demountable to allow access to the pitch area for the purpose of increasing capacity through the phasing;
- Hospitality space will be created to its full capacity. However, the top tier of the boxes/suites will be fitted out only when the demand dictates;
- The pitch will meet UEFA standards;
- Hospitality provision will allow access to all areas in all phases;
- Viewing standards will not be compromised in any phase; and
- Accommodation for matchdays and non-matchdays as set out above.

Crowd movement and related issues are recognised as significant matters which need to be addressed. Movement Strategies are experts in people movement and crowd dynamics. Their consultants are some of the most experienced in the industry and they have pioneered new methods and undertaken some of the most difficult crowd planning challenges on some of the world's biggest projects. Their work helps to deliver

places and events that are safe, enjoyable, financially successful, and enhance the reputation of the designers, operators and venues. Their report will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Environmental

An EIA Scoping Report will be submitted before the end of September 2013. Baseline studies are currently being undertaken and it is expected that this body of work will be completed by mid October 2013.

Peter Brett Associates (PBA) have engaged with the Environment Agency who although were helpful at the meeting held in February 2013, there has been some reluctance in responding in any detailed manner. In order to proactively move forward we would suggest that a meeting is held between the Environment Agency, LB Merton and the project team to discuss. PBA are confident that a robust and safe scheme can be developed to address flooding concerns. This is addressed in their attached note.

In terms of flooding, based on historic data it is unlikely that the site is exposed to the frequency of flooding indicated by the Environment Agency flood modelling. We also note that the Environment Agency responded more positively to the previous representation made.

Transport

The transport modelling and research undertaken to understand the impact of the proposed development is set out in the enclosed report. As above, further testing is required but it is considered that a solution is achievable which will accord with the site's objectives.

Together with greyhound racing, the site has for many years held regular race events on Friday and Saturday evenings as well as other events such as a Sunday market and stock car racing. The current uses are supported by a large car park that can accommodate up to 900 cars and so most people travel to the stadium by car. There is no green travel plan in place to encourage the use of non-car modes.

Public transport access to the site is reasonably good. There are frequent train services to central London from Hayden's Road and the London Underground Network can be accessed from Tooting Broadway by frequent bus services available from Garratt Lane. The site is well served by a range of local bus services which provide access to more local facilities as well as to Wimbledon town centre.

There is therefore an opportunity to create a sustainable mixed use development on this site. Highway impacts can be effectively controlled by limiting the level of on-site parking and through a full Travel Plan. The impacts of the proposed football stadium would be controlled through detailed match day management plans. These are likely to include additional match day parking controls to limit impacts upon the surrounding residential areas.

Socio-Economic Impact

As an investment in the sporting infrastructure of the area, AFC Wimbledon Stadium will yield considerable economic and social dividends and act as the catalyst for a heightened focus in LB Merton across areas such as sport and leisure participation, community engagement, place brand profiling, enterprise development and the creation of local employment. The club's long term vision for the stadium is closely aligned to the economic development strategy for LB Merton and will contribute to the realisation of areas medium to long term strategic economic and social objectives.

The development of the 'place making sector' strategy that will position Wimbledon as a core sports destination for tourism, culture and commercial sports services can run parallel to the development of the stadium model. Currently one in twenty jobs in Merton are in the broader recreation, culture and sports sector, almost twice the national average. As the platform for growth currently exists it does however require a strong anchor theme. The development of AFC Wimbledon Stadium will be the sector 'enabler' through associated economic activity and support the LB Merton's progression to the next level of securing sustainable higher value employment in the area. As an economic development mechanism, the stadium will represent the platform for broader engagement and become a constituent element of the 'Place Making Sector' strategy focusing on Sport and Leisure.

The development of the new AFC Wimbledon Stadium will generate immediate direct and indirect economic benefits. The construction phase of the stadium and residential areas will provide high worth construction jobs with comparable stadium / residential developments generating in excess of 350 annual Full Time Equivalent (FTE's) jobs. The projected direct expenditure from stadium activity levels range from £6.6 million to £7.5 million, representing new expenditure in the area without any level of displacement in the vicinity of the proposed stadium. The ability of the club to achieve average attendances of circa 10,000 will represent a total economic impact of £12.7 million per annum with a significant value add to exchequer receipts from a higher level of sports stimulated economic activity.

The club recognises the role it will play in supporting the Sport, Health & Physical Activity strategy of LB Merton and future business plans to support sport led community regeneration. The ambition of the club is to become a key strategic partner in developing Healthier Communities and also use sport to develop additional community activity based on the clubs existing outputs. Currently, AFC Wimbledon provides over 900 contact hours in the community each season through a range of social and community programmes delivered by 14 dedicated Community Football personnel. Over the course of a season the club reaches approximately 2,875 residents of LB Merton, the majority of which are children, young people and groups at risk. The club currently generates in the region of £1.4 million in social value for the Borough through its community programmes.

The development of the AFC Wimbledon Stadium provides an immediate opportunity to create a Wimbledon sports tourism destination brand to extend the profile of the area beyond the global attention received during the All England Championships. The stated intention of LB Merton to develop tourism activity needs to incorporate a wider mix of visitor options and reasons to travel to the area. There is currently no brand proposition for the area leveraging off the global sports recognition the name Wimbledon possesses. The creation of a necklace of attractions and sporting activity needs to be supported with a strategic destination plan with sport as the core attraction.

In conclusion, the development of the AFC Wimbledon Stadium will be a key element of a broader sports led regeneration strategy delivered through partnership with all relevant bodies. The overriding goal and ambition for the community is the creation of an economically sustainable, healthy and active borough. The development of the stadium facility represents one element of a broader strategy, however, provides visibility to the commitment of the club and its associated stakeholders to use sport as a catalyst for economic, social and sporting change in LB Merton.

Policy

The proposals will achieve 'Sporting Intensification' at the site through a carefully designed and balanced land use which will bring both community and economic benefits to the Borough and its residents.

I trust the above is clear but please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan Parr
Director
Savills Planning

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Business Plan – AFC Wimbledon
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Masterplan Drawings – Sheppard Robson/Derek Wilson Architects
Stadium Proposal Report – Derek Wilson Architects
AFCW Business Case – Sept 2013
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