

# **Lionel Road Liaison Group Meeting (LRLG) Minutes**

**17 October 2016, 7pm-9pm**

**Venue: London Museum of Water and Steam, Kew**

**Chair: Robert Gordon Clark, LCA**

## **Project Team:**

**London Irish:** Mark Bensted (MB), Bob Casey (BC), Paddy Lennon, Paul Forsyth, Mick Crossan, Andy Keast, Michael O'Hagan

**Brentford Football Club:** Brian Burgess (BB), David Hayes, Rhys Williams

**WSP:** Jamie Connors (JC)

**Carter Jonas:** Richard Jones (RJ), Sam Neal

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

## **Attendees:**

Tim Lockett – Brentford Chamber of Commerce

Kath Richardson (KR) – Brentford Chamber of Commerce

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

John Burgess – Brentford Community Council

Derek Collett (DC) – Brentford Community Council

Tom Moore – Hounslow Chronicle

James Richardson (JR) – Kew Bridge News

Marie Roubahans (MR) – West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society

Martin Taylor (MT) – Kew Society

Philip Marchant – BIAS

Andrew Ross (AR) – Strand on the Green resident

Dorothy Boland (DB) – Strand on the Green resident

James Korner (JaK) – Strand on the Green resident

Julia Korner (JuK) – Strand on the Green resident

## **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Robert Gordon Clark (RGC), chair of the meeting welcomed everyone and introduced the project teams from Brentford FC, London Irish and project consultants from WSP and Carter Jonas. There were no apologies given on the night. Ruth Cadbury MP sent apologies by e-mail as did Councillors.

## **2. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting on 12 October 2015 were agreed.

## **3. Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

## **4. Project Update – Brian Burgess (BB)**

BB provided an update on the stadium project (see BFC slides). The main points made were that:

- Willmott Dixon was granted reserved matters planning approval for the residential elements on the Lionel Road South and Capital Court sites in January 2016.
- The CPO process for the acquisition of Capital Court by London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) was completed on 1 September 2016.
- The CPO covers the entire development site, not just Capital Court, and the freehold for the entire site is now owned by LBH until such time as the development phases are completed. At these points freehold ownership will transfer back to Lionel Road Developments (LRD).
- LRD has a temporary lease and will be granted a 250-year lease by LBH for the entire development site shortly (October/November 2016).

- LRD are now working with the development partner Willmott Dixon to satisfy the pre-commencement planning conditions, the S106 pre-commencement planning conditions and to complete the financial and legal arrangements required before work on site can commence.
- LRD have been looking for hotel brands and operators to develop the hotel site included in the planning permission. As a result a Section 73 application has been made to make some changes to the number of rooms in the hotel and to change the use of space in the west stand for hotel back of house functions.
- In layman's terms there are two types of Section 73. Its original purpose was to vary or remove conditions associated with a planning permission. Given this, the S73 is the correct procedure to follow for the London Irish application. More recently S73 has been used to make minor-material changes and LRD have used a S73 minor-material amendment application for the hotel..
- As approving a Section 73 application leads to a new permission being issued, and as it is not yet certain which version of the hotel approval will be implemented, London Irish has to change both planning permissions for each hotel variant.
- The project vision has always been for the stadium to be used for both football and rugby and that they have held talks with many rugby clubs over 10 years.
- He said that neither LRD nor LI could commit to a formal agreement until and unless the S73 is approved.
- Condition 7 was originally put in the planning permission because at that time LRD did not know who its rugby club partner would be and therefore could not assess the travel data for the club and its fans. It was understood that if and when this information became known the applicant would then go back and seek an amendment.

**Q1: What is Condition 7?** (James Richardson - JR)

A: Condition 7 of the planning permission currently states that that the stadium cannot be used for: 1) the playing of competitive professional rugby 2) a standalone musical performance utilising the pitch. (RJ)

**Q2: What changes are you making to the hotel?** (James Korner)

A: The number of hotel bedrooms is being increased by five to suit the brand and their bedroom sizes, increasing from 160 to 165 beds. The shape and size remains the same. (BB)

**5. An introduction to London Irish Rugby Club – Bob Casey, CEO (BC)**

See presentation slides.

**Q3: What is the rugby season?** (Derek Collett - DC)

A: The season starts in September and runs to the end of May (BC)

**Q4: What is the ownership structure of London Irish?** (Martin Taylor - MT)

A: The ownership/shareholding is principally a consortium of three partners with different sized shareholdings. Set up in December 2013, by long standing supporters of London Irish. MB introduced President and majority owner Mick Crossan, who was in the audience. (MB)

MT added that it would be helpful to understand the club's ownership and funding at the next stage, as they now understood Brentford FC but wanted to find out more about London Irish too.

**Action: MB to provide further details on the ownership of London Irish.**

**Note following the meeting:**

London Irish Holdings Ltd (the Company) where 100% of the shares sit has the following shareholding, ostensibly made up of four shareholding groups:

1. Majority Shareholder - Michael Crossan/Powerday plc - 64.4%
2. Shareholder - Philip Cusack/P.F. Cusack Tool Supplies Ltd - 18.4%
3. Shareholder - Lawida Trading Establishment (effectively a family trust) - 9.2%
4. Longstanding Minority Shareholders (approximately 518 in number most with a very small shareholding) - 8.0%

**Q5: You are looking to expand your community programmes in Hounslow. What about Richmond and amateur clubs there? (MT)**

A: The RFU has assigned "Middlesex" (covering a large part of North and West London, and still referred to as Middlesex by the RFU), in addition to Hampshire and Berkshire, as exclusive territory areas for London Irish's Academy programme. (BC)

Andy Keast, Head of Community at London Irish was introduced to answer the question and he explained how the Club had been contacting a lot of schools in Hounslow and Chiswick and amateur clubs throughout the area, such as Actonians, to introduce themselves. The Club is now meeting with Gunnersbury School as a result of this contact.

**Q6: But there is zero benefit to people in Kew and Richmond from London Irish for the disruption they will cause? No community benefit to compensate for the additional traffic through support for community clubs in Richmond? (MT)**

A: LI explained that Richmond comes within the RFU's Surrey Academy area, which Harlequins oversees. BC explained that the academy areas do not apply to engagement with local schools and where Harlequins are not engaging with schools in the area London Irish could look to do so. For example, LI currently work with a school in St Margaret's. (BC)

**Q7: You went 'back to your roots' in Hazelwood. Now you want to go 'back to your roots' in Hounslow. Is this philanthropic? What's the real reason? (JR)**

A: Our roots are in the west London area. We were in Sunbury until 2000. When the game turned professional in 1995 different standards for grounds were introduced. There was pressure on everyone to sort out their grounds. It was difficult for all clubs. Exeter and Sale changed their grounds to survive. London Irish want to come back to our traditional fan base in West London. Training has always been in Sunbury. Hazelwood is our new facility just around the corner from the old training base and will help sustain us well which will sustain us into the future. It's also for the kids and amateur teams. It's their 'home'. Given our history in this locality our strong preference is to bring the professional team match days back into this area. (MB)

**Q8: But will it be more commercially viable? (RGC)**

A: Long term it will make LI more sustainable. The first hurdle is the Section 73. In London, in a new stadium, closer to our fans there will be commercial benefits for the club. Reading has been a happy home for us but it doesn't work for us financially. Travel is difficult to that location, crowds are declining. We're at risk if we're not able to come back. This is a good opportunity to help the club sustain itself well into the future. (MB)

**Q9: BFC and LI will play at the Brentford Community Stadium every other weekend. We will have matches every weekend from September, yes?** (JR)

A: The majority of weekends between September and May (but not all) will have a match. We will work hard to minimise the occasions when football and rugby are played on the same weekend. (MB)

**Note following the meeting:** At the Madjeski stadium this season there are likely to be 22 weekends per year without either a rugby or football match (this could decrease if Reading FC has an extended cup run with matches played at the Madjeski stadium).

**Q10: Can you describe in more detail the commercial arrangement. Who will pay who? How do you add up the commercial viability?** (Andrew Ross - AR)

A: If it does happen the ground will still be owned by BFC. LI would therefore pay rent to BFC. We have not, however, negotiated commercial terms yet. This is potentially a win-win for both clubs: rent will help BFC, bigger crowds and commercial revenues at the new stadium will help LI.

**Q11: But you're running profitably at the moment?** (AR)

A: No, we're running at a loss. That's familiar for lots of rugby clubs. To break even is the ambition. It would be difficult to achieve this at Reading. (MB)

**Q12: If paying a rent it helps their commercial viability.** (AR)

A: London Irish and Brentford complement each other very well. Brentford has a great community programme and feel. There's a natural synergy between the two clubs. (MB)

BB added that BFC had always wanted to share with a rugby club to "sweat the asset". BFC want to increase attendances and commercial revenues. London Irish also want bigger attendances and revenues. Match day and non-match day income, (the latter increased through conferencing and banqueting activities) would accrue to both clubs through the stadium operating company. The new stadium will help both clubs achieve these objectives. (BB)

**Q13: What's your break even gate?** (Derek Collett - DC)

A: London Irish's current average attendance is around 7,400 – but that figure is skewed by the St Patrick's Day fixture each season, which attracts a sell-out crowd. Disregarding the St Patrick's Day game, our average attendance is in the region 6,000. We are aspiring to 14,000 at the new stadium and have modelled this and 20,000 for the transport assessment. A good average when we are successful would be 12,000-14,000. Harlequins currently attract gates of this size on a regular basis at their home ground in Twickenham. (MB)

**Q14: The area is gridlocked. How will it cope with the traffic? What time on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday would there be matches?** (Julia Korner - JuK)

London Irish: Friday night games would kick off at 7.30pm or 7.45pm; on weekends matches would generally kick off at 3pm. We have, however, in recent years only had two games on a Friday night. In the last three years in Reading, LI have had two Friday matches. We try to avoid Friday night games and work with the broadcasters to minimise their occurrence. (MB)

BFC: The majority of matches kick off at 3pm on Saturdays. Tuesday night games would kick off at 7.45pm. Matches can be moved to other days and times if they are televised. At the moment this is a rare occurrence. In the last couple of seasons a couple of games have been moved to Friday night for television. (BB) (Fulham at home two seasons ago; QPR at home last season; Fulham at home this season.)

**Q15: What happens if you go bust? What covenants are there on the stadium?** (James Korner – JaK)

A: The planning permission for the stadium specifies its use is for football only. In principle the stadium could be used by another football club. (RJ)

Typically football clubs do not go out of business but are bought by new owners. Even if clubs do get into serious financial trouble, they rarely go out of existence. (BB)

**Q16: LI were relegated last season. What effect has that had on gates?** (JR)

A: The impact has been that the gates have halved from an average of 6,000 to 3,000. If we go back up we could get 7,000 and more. Success on the pitch is important. We know we will not go from 7,000 to our target attendance of 14,000 overnight, we expect to get there gradually over a number of seasons. From a planning point of view all the modelling though is based on a crowd of 14,000 (MB) BC explained how London Irish could go back up to the Premiership at the end of the season, by finishing in the top four positions of the league and winning the play offs.

**6. S73 Planning Application for rugby use: Planning Process – Richard Jones (RJ), Carter Jonas**

**Q17: So the process is the Section 73 application, if granted, then negotiate. Why not submit a full planning application for rugby use?** (MT)

A: We are seeking to vary condition 7.1. of the planning permission and have submitted Section 73 in order to do so. This process will result in a new full planning permission being granted by LBH that will allow both rugby and football to be played at the stadium. As part of this process London Irish will have to submit full assessments in relation to all aspects of the planning application that are different. This application will result in no physical changes to the stadium. However the impact from rugby use will be different to what has currently been assessed. This will have consequences for transport, noise, air quality. The Environmental Statement has to be revisited for all those areas and assessed in the same way as for a new application. That's why Section 73 is appropriate. (RJ)

**Q18: But there is one big difference. For Section 73 there is no obligation on the planning authority to consult formally. It is up to the local planning authority.** (Marie Roubahans - MR)

A: No. I'm not sure that is right. For minor material amendments you might not have to but I'm 90% sure that for this a full consultation is required. RJ stated that he would check to confirm that this is the case. (RJ)

**Action: The Chair asked RJ to confirm with LBH as soon as possible.**

**Note following the meeting:** RJ has confirmed that whilst the Council can have discretion on S73 consultation, when an Environmental Impact Assessment is required there has to be full consultation.

**Q19: What about London Borough of Richmond?** (MT)

**Action: RJ to confirm with LBH whether Richmond will be consulted.**

**Note following the meeting:** LBH has confirmed that London Borough of Richmond will be consulted.

**Q20: You're not changing the physical building but you're doubling the number of match days.** (MR)

A: We recognise that. It will all be assessed. We want you to feedback comments to officers and decision makers so that they can reach a conclusion. They can't do that without your input. (RJ)

BB added that this evening's meeting had been organised so that a discussion could be had with residents now, so that they then had time to participate in the formal consultation process.

**Q21: My issue is the frequency, going from 28 to potentially 50 matches. The negative impacts will double.** (MR)

A: The assessment of the impact has been provided within the Environmental Statement Addendum and Transport Assessment which can be viewed on LBH's website. It is the role of the LBH planning committee to decide. They must weigh up the cumulative impact of the scheme and make a decision. (RJ)

**Q22: Will it cover the implications on Kew Bridge and traffic south of the river? What's the likely combination of rugby or football matches with a Twickenham event? The scoping requirements of LBH exclude Richmond but it's fundamental. Important for Twickenham and in terms of the intensification of stadium use on the south and on Kew Bridge. Richmond objected to the original application because this was not previously considered. (MT)**

A: It is highly unlikely that rugby matches will be played at Twickenham and the Brentford Community Stadium on the same day. (BC)

There have been football matches at Griffin Park on the same day as rugby games at Twickenham which has not been a problem in the past. When this has occurred in recent years the kick off times of the games have been different. (BB)

## **7. S73 Planning Application for rugby use: Transport Update – Jamie Connors (JC), WSP**

See presentation slides including Two Circles Sport Consultancy research into behaviour of rugby and football fans before and after matches.

**Q23: The £35,000 for TFL: what will this contribution be used for? Can it be added to the funds for Gunnersbury Station improvements? (MR)**

A: It was envisioned at the time planning permission was agreed that this money would be allocated towards a study looking at the impacts of the stadium on local traffic and how the flow of traffic around Chiswick Roundabout can be approved, once the stadium was open and operating. (BB)

RJ added that this was the thinking at the time the contributions were agreed with TfL.

**Q24: Concerned about queuing Option 1 at Gunnersbury Station, which shows the queue across Gunnersbury Mews – that's their only access point? (MR)**

A: The management plan will ensure stewarding at this key junction and that queues do not block the entrance. They will be queuing outside rather than inside the station. (JC)

**Q25 Concerned about the additional footfall during rush hour on already pressured stations such as Gunnersbury. (JaK)**

A: We can look at footfall per hour in the rush hour, and how many come to Gunnersbury. (JC)

**Action: To request per-hour commuter numbers from TfL.**

Local management plans will be looked at. No one wants to see a problem. And if problems arise they will be mitigated. The plans will evolve over time, however, as far as possible we will anticipate and plan for issues now. (JC)

Football fans tend to arrive at the stadium later than rugby fans and those using Gunnersbury Station would be likely to arrive there from 6:45 onwards. (BB)

**Q26: There won't be enough space with the business commuters as well. (Dorothy Boland - DB)**

**Q27: The existing fan base will come up from Richmond at arrive at Gunnersbury in the middle of rush hour. (Andrew Ross - AR)**

**Q28: Are the figures for arriving in the area or to the stadium?** (Kath Richardson - KR)

A: They are arriving at the stadium (JC)

**Q29: What did Two Circles say about evening matches?**

A: We don't have that information. (JC)

We will try not to have evening matches. The Club works with the Rugby Football Union to minimise the number of evening matches when the fixture list is compiled. LI has a say on this. (BC)

**Q30: Will you remodel if a decision is reached on Heathrow, which we expect will happen before Christmas? Your models then become irrelevant?** (JaK)

A: RGC suggested that even if a Heathrow decision would be made soon, it would still be many years before any expansion was delivered.

**Q31: Have you made any progress agreeing parking on the A4? Do you know some sites are turning from office to residential so won't be available for use?** (MR)

A: We don't have a start on site date yet, so it is still too early to have detailed conversations with the businesses on the A4. We have identified a number of potential sites and have had preliminary conversations. Once we know the start on site date then we will then begin these discussions. (BB)

**Action: The Chair noted that the LRLG will be updated again about this when progress has been made.**

**Q32: In the original transport assessment for BFC it was indicated that some supporters would come in to Kew Gardens Station but you are not showing any usage of that station in the transport assessment for LI.** (MT)

A: No we are not. This is not what we have been asked to do by TfL and has not been included in this assessment. (JC)

**Q33: Who is WSP's client? Why are you following what TfL is telling you to do?** (DC)

A: LI is our client but TfL is the regional statutory highway authority. We have to deliver information in accordance with what they ask for. (JC)

BB added that the purpose of the transport assessment is to look at the worst case scenario, which is focussed on impacts on Gunnersbury Station, assuming all fans coming from Richmond alight at Gunnersbury and not at Kew Gardens.

**Action: The Chair noted concerns from residents that Kew Bridge and further south was not currently being assessed and asked WSP to consider whether they should broaden their brief.**

**Q34: With an increase in people from Sunbury does this put extra pressure for a new station at Lionel Road? That would be a significant mitigation.** (AR)

A: This was always actively supported by us. LBH are looking at a feasibility study with Network Rail. This has now moved from the concept phase to the planning phase and progress is being made, albeit at Network Rail speed. We hope that it is a real possibility. (BB)

Stephen Fry from the Hounslow Chamber of Commerce said that the Hounslow Economic Business Forum had written to the Mayor of London highlighting the need for immediate capacity improvements and the proposed links to both Crossrail and HS2. It is on the Mayor's agenda. There is also due to be another consultation shortly on the Golden Mile strategy.

**Action: The Project Team to find out more about progress on a new station to be able to update the LRLG.**

JC ended his presentation going through the contributions agreed in the planning permission and that he would be happy to hear further from this group their views, to discuss with Hounslow and TfL.

**Q35: Residents stressed further the local transport issues that currently exist – in particular gridlock on Lionel Road and queried how the future new residents would manage.** (JuK, MR)

A: Residents would know what the access arrangements are when they buy their property. Match day restrictions would only be in place for a short period before kick-off and after the final whistle. BB added that at the moment the site currently has 150 heavy goods vehicles a day going to and from the waste transfer facility currently on the Lionel Road site and that this would not happen in the future. (BB)

**Q36: Have you included the new 550 apartments being built in Capital Interchange Way?**

A: This scheme has been considered as part of the assessment for the application.

**Q37: What is the timing of the Section 73 process and how is this linked to the commencement of development on site? (John Burgess)**

A: The intention is that this will go to LBH's Planning Committee for decision in January next year (2017). The Council allow 21 days for consultation but they have to take into account anything they receive up to the Committee decision. Development on site is targeted to commence in the first half of 2017. (RJ)

8. The Chair then brought the meeting to a close with an offer to arrange any further meetings between London Irish and individual groups on request, and that the Project Team's is available to answer any questions at any point. He also confirmed that the minutes, in draft, will be sent to all attendees asap to comment.

**Any Other Business**

Nothing raised.

**Date of Next Meeting**

TBC