

LEAMINGTON FOOTBALL CLUB

Community Stadium – Community Benefit

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Introduction

This document summarises the benefits to the local community and Leamington Football Club ("**Club**") of a relocation of the Club to a new stadium within the Myton Garden Suburb.

Our proposal is for a new stadium with a capacity for 5,000 people, as well as a range of new facilities for the Club. These facilities would be available for use by the local community; serving local people, schools, community groups and charities with future additional opportunities for onsite health, education and small business provision.

As part of the proposed enabling development new facilities located close to the new stadium are likely to include; residential flats, a crèche, convenience store, hotel, pub and a small number of local retail units serving the local area as a community services and retail hub.

The Club has grown rapidly since its rebirth in August 2000 having climbed five levels of the football pyramid and attained FA Charter Standard Community status with 26 boys/girls/ladies/men's teams playing in the Club's colours, involving 350 players and 70 volunteers.

The Club currently runs a rapidly expanding coaching programme (currently 24 sessions at 10 venues) across the community, working in partnership with Birmingham County FA, Warwick District Council, Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs (**WAYC**), Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sport (**CSW**) and a number of other bodies. In addition to the above the Club runs school holiday camps, match-day coaching sessions, goalkeeping clinics and other selected health and well-being programmes within the community.

Schools, other football clubs, youth and disabled groups and other bodies act as 'Guards of Honour' on match-days with children aged under 12 given FREE entry to matches. All players and volunteers of affiliated teams are given free entry to first team games.

The Club has additionally been involved in a range of initiatives promoting awareness on health issues and helping to improve the health of the local community. These have ranged from on-site promotion of prostate cancer awareness, "No Smoking" and "Health MOT" days with the NHS; organising and leading a "Healthy Walking Programme"; and cardiac testing.

Our vision is to develop the Club at the very heart of the community, delivering benefits that provide physical, personal and social development opportunities for people of all ages through sports participation, health awareness and social inclusion initiatives and programmes.

All the aforementioned work and activity is something that the Club is strongly committed to and wants to expand and develop further. However, the Club has rapidly outgrown our current site in Harbury Lane, which now struggles to be fit for purpose largely due to its remote location off a single lane countryside carriageway.

The current volunteer-led business model is not sustainable in the mid to long term. The Club has been unable to generate sufficient non-match day clubhouse and bar revenue, despite its best endeavours. Since opening the facilities in 2005, bar and conference/meeting revenue has never grossed more than £55,000 in any financial year and in later years has fallen to between £35-40,000. Location, lack of public transport links and additional costs of getting to and from the current ground are cited as the main inhibitors by potential users. It is our firm view that in an accessible location, such as the proposed new site off Gallows Hill, this revenue could increase by a minimum of three-fold.

The track record and commitment of the Club as evidenced by the development of a 3000 capacity stadium and associated facilities on our current site (which has been largely built by volunteers and 90% self funded through fund-raising activity) is there for all to see. In addition, through our commitment and work within the community we are considered by many to be making a significant contribution to the local community. We firmly believe that we can with the right facilities in the right location do so much more.

Back in the year 2000 no one could have envisaged the progress that has been made by the Club at our current site. Unfortunately, that location is the very thing that now blocks the sustainability, growth and future development of the Club as an important player in the local community.

Community Use/Benefit

Spectators

We currently average 500 spectators per each first team home game with approximately 15,000 fans visiting our stadium each season. It is difficult to predict the impact on spectator attendance of a move to a new and improved stadium with any certainty; however independent studies show that significant growth in spectator numbers can be achieved.

Using the experiences of Kidderminster Harriers, AFC Telford United and Maidstone United as a guide (all play in modern stadiums at Levels 1 & 2 of the non-league pyramid and each have conurbations of circa 100,000 population), these clubs average 1,200-1,300 spectators per game in poor performance periods and 1,600-2,000+ spectators in successful times on the field of play.

A very recent example of the impact of new stadium facilities is that of AFC Fylde who moved into a new stadium this season and have seen their average crowds increase from an average of 350 to over 1500. Based on these figures, it is not unreasonable to expect a minimum of a two-fold increase in spectator numbers for the Club; an increase to 1,000 per game on average.

The vision of the Club playing in a new stadium is to reduce spectator admission prices through increased footfall, making viewing more affordable for families and individuals, leading to increasing community engagement, local pride and civic identity. This is proving a successful model at FC United of Manchester (current average crowds of 2,700) and is a template that the Club would seek to follow.

Use of Stadium Facility(See Appendix 4b for activity grid)

It is our intention that the new stadium will be far more than just a football stadium, providing a range of facilities for sport, business and leisure use. In addition to the elements of the stadium needed for football, we propose including in the stadium complex:

- a sports bar;
- a cafe;
- a function room;
- meeting room(s);
- an education/IT facility;
- a conference room;
- a gymnasium; and
- a dance/aerobic room.

These stadium facilities would be available for use and or hire by local people, local schools, local community groups seeking meeting spaces, or local businesses requiring conference facilities and meeting spaces. The outreach into the community would be extended by wider sport, health/well being and education partnership working with Warwick District Council and local education and other bodies aimed at improving social inclusion and cohesion, and providing development pathways and opportunities for individuals.

Out-with first team match-day activity our current site only has a footfall of 160 persons per week with the vast majority of Club community activity taking place off site at a range of more accessible locations.

The proposed stadium site located within a community sports hub, next to the Warwick Technology Park and near to housing would be ideally located to serve the community. Whilst it is difficult to accurately predict the levels of footfall out-with first team match-day activity within a new stadium, Appendix 4B identifies proposed facility options, likely hours of availability and our best estimates of possible levels of use.

It is envisaged that the new stadium facility will lead to an almost sixteen fold non match-day footfall increase of 136,000 beneficiary/users per year as opposed to 8,250 on the Club's current site.

Stadium Pitch Use

The installation of a 3G artificial playing surface will increase pitch usage to circa 40-50 hours per week with a vastly increased number of users and significant commercial benefits. (See Appendix 4B). Whilst the Club already hosts Warwickshire Schools Cup Finals and representative matches it is envisaged that these games can be increased in number and also provide opportunities for school tournament-based events. Additionally, it is expected that there will be scope to host more local league cup finals and end of season five-a-side tournaments involving both community groups and local businesses.

Commercial and Service-Related Uses

The commercial element of the proposed enabling development is likely to include a proposed hotel, pub/restaurant, a crèche/nursery and a local convenience store out-with the stadium footprint, but opportunity exists to accommodate a range of leisure, community and service-related uses both within the stadium and the wider site that are complimentary to a local community hub and sports destination venue. These could include:

- sports therapy and health services;
- a pharmacy;
- beauty therapy;
- a Club shop; and
- a food outlet.

Additional Community Activity Benefits

Working in partnership with an education provider a new academy programme will be developed to provide approximately thirty 16-18 year olds with vocational teaching and elite training. This in turn will provide them with pathways into semi-professional football, higher education or other careers in diverse areas of sport.

The new stadium will provide office and meeting space to assist the development of the already rapidly expanding Leamington FC Youth Development Programme, which provides promising players in the community between the ages of 7-16 with additional training and coaching opportunities to develop their talent.

The new stadium will also provide an accessible home and meeting place for the existing community and affiliated teams of the Club that are planned to expand to 35-40 in number in the next five years. That will be an increase of 120-200 boys and girls participating in active team sport.

Our partnership with Warwick District Council and local education provider will give rise to additional opportunities for training and sports participation for boys and girls of all ages. The Club would also be able to further develop its links with other local schools as it grows. For example, we believe that the Club's holiday camp scheme will grow from its existing 20 days and 400 participants to a total of 50 days and 2,500 participants per annum.

The proposed partnerships could be linked with specialist facilities and staff based at the new stadium, such as within a learning centre, youth centre and various specialist workshops. These could provide both education and a focus for leisure time for young people, and would help to encourage them to participate in sports. This would have a range of health and social benefits, and could help to instil lifelong habits of participation in sport.

Our club has two recent examples of children with learning difficulties significantly engaging in sport. One of these was on a Club holiday camp and the other at a Club coaching scheme. In both instances the Club's coaches were advised by respective carers that it was the first time they had seen either child engage actively in sporting activity and this was because of the quality of the coaches' inter-action with the children and the coaching provision. These are only two heart-warming examples of what can be achieved. The Club has started a separate disability team in 2015 and plans to extend this programme in the coming years in partnership with Birmingham County FA.

The new stadium facility will promote football more widely within the community than we can currently from our ground at Harbury Lane; with the Club collaborating with Warwick District Council, education and sports bodies to host educational programmes including first aid training and FA coaching courses.

The proposed child-care facilities of a crèche/nursery centre would provide play and learning spaces for young children accompanying families who visit the site to use the sports facilities. They will also serve the residential, business and educational communities.

Community Cohesion and Vision

A football club can bring many benefits to the community within which it is situated. It can help to provide a social identity and community cohesion. It can also be a focal point having the ability to unite a town through the promotion of civic pride and identity.

The Club wants to actively engage with the community from young to old and create a wider Club family. We already have 10 men and women ("Scrubbers Club") aged 65 and over who attend the Club at least once a week (frequently more often) to carry out a range of volunteer roles that include administration, cleaning, general and pitch maintenance and hosting of Club events.

Our vision in the new stadium is to significantly expand these roles and the numbers participating, seeking to harness the skills and expertise of the older generations and provide them with valued inter-action and friendships as well as giving them an opportunity to provide guidance and advice to the younger generations.

We also want the Club to become a training venue for those younger generations where they learn, grow and gain experience in a wide variety of roles. Yes it is ambitious, but we have already achieved so much within the constraints of our current site. A new stadium facility would provide massive opportunities for expansion.

Our vision is to be a club for the community. We firmly believe that this will provide a sustainable community facility that the whole wider Warwick District area can be proud of and provide a legacy for many future generations to come.