

Working together

A vision of the future in partnership with the

London Borough of Barnet,

for the benefit of the community.



BARNET
FOOTBALL CLUB



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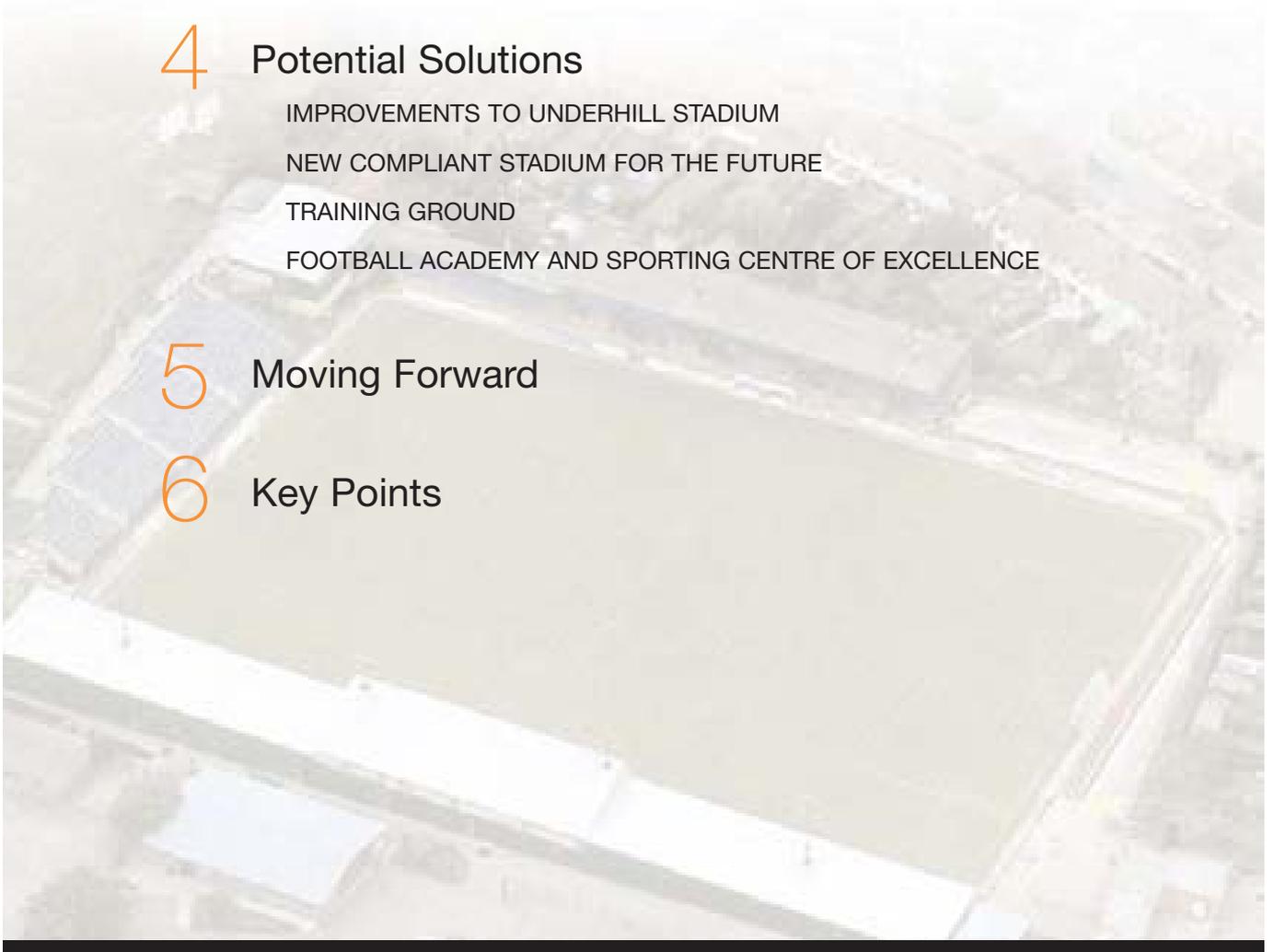
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Summary

Over the past decade, Barnet FC has found its existence threatened by the need to adhere to the requirements of the Taylor Report and Football Ground Criteria. During that time, the clubs' Directors and Chairman have invested huge amounts of their personal time and money in developing and presenting various options for complying with the new criteria.

All of the options developed to date have tried to take into account the needs and concerns of local residents. However, none of the options have enjoyed the simultaneous support of all the parties involved, mainly because of the potential green belt issues, and have as a result failed.

The continued existence of Barnet FC is of importance not only for the club's staff and supporters, but also for the benefit of the wider community within the borough. For this reason, we believe that the club and the council should be working TOGETHER, rather than against each other, for the benefit of the borough's residents.

This document outlines the history of Barnet FC's struggle to survive, and suggests possible ways of moving forward, in partnership with the London Borough of Barnet, on a range of facilities that can be enjoyed both by the club and the wider community.

Lastly, the document contains a request – and a challenge – to the borough councillors to set aside party differences and support the club.

Such support would create an opportunity for the club and the council to work together to achieve joint objectives and find ways of overcoming the obstacles that exist.

Failure to support would send a clear signal to us that the council is not interested in the survival of Barnet FC, or the many benefits it provides to the local community. Under such circumstances, the club will have no choice but to reconsider its options, which may well mean having to move out of the borough.



Introduction

This document is to help give supporters of Barnet FC, councillors and residents of the borough a clear understanding of the issues that we have tried to overcome and those that still face us as we move forward into the 21st Century.

Our future lies in the endorsement of this plan by the community, and as such we aim to provide a clearer focus to which all can easily relate and, in so doing, gain greater support.

YOU'VE BEEN OUR NEIGHBOURS FOR OVER 90 YEARS.

Please. Don't evict us now.



Barnet Football Club have been playing at Underhill since 1906 - long before most of the surrounding houses were even built!

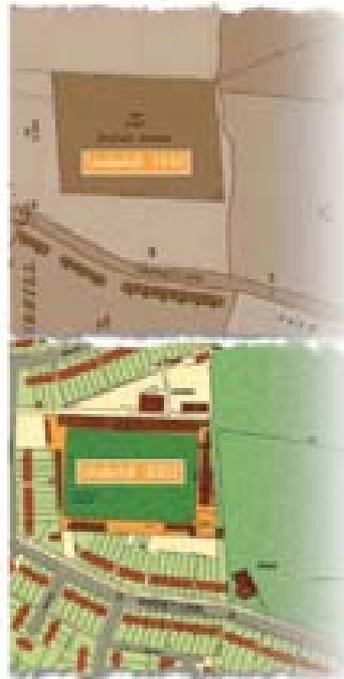
Over the past few years we have been desperately searching for a site within the borough that will enable us to meet League safety requirements.

Every option we have presented has been turned down.

Our very existence is now at stake. We have one final opportunity to keep the club within the borough, by constructing a new community sporting arena adjacent to the existing stadium. In designing the new site, we have tried to be as sympathetic as possible to the needs of you, our neighbours.

We believe that Barnet deserves to continue to have its own football club. So do our loyal fans, and many other local residents who benefit from our Community Schemes.

Please give us a chance.



THE FACTS

- The new arena will cover 7 acres of land adjacent to the existing site
- It is no bigger than the existing ground at Barnet Lane and Watford Way
- The new development will include extensive landscaping features, and will generate employment in local businesses, services and local shops etc.
- Barnet United FC, which currently operates the club, will be relocated to a site with better facilities
- Local residents will be able to enjoy an even better view of recreation ground

Real Football. Real Fans.  **BARNET**

UNDERHILL 1910 - 2003



The Struggle for Survival

A brief overview of Barnet FC's efforts to fulfil the new Ground Criteria, and an outline of the current situation.

Barnet FC has been in residence at Underhill for over one hundred years and has experienced many changes through that time. Surrounding development hemmed in the site during the twenties and thirties, but access remained satisfactory.



EXISTING STADIUM CONFIGURED FOR MAXIMUM CAPACITY OF 5,500

The introduction of the Taylor Report and Football Ground Criteria in recent years has effectively halved the stadium capacity, which now stands at approx 4,800. The ground and facilities at Underhill stadium are not fully compliant with new legislation in terms of facilities for ladies and the disabled, full segregation of supporters, parking and security for players and officials, and emergency access and egress to the south. There is a gradient to the pitch in excess of 2 metres over its length, and sight lines are very poor. In addition, there are numerous issues that require urgent attention and continue to burden the club; ranging from the high maintenance cost of old structures to the need for extensive stewarding on match days to maintain our excellent safety record.

There is hope that the club can continue with the ground in its present condition with minimal changes for another season, 2003/04. Later in this document we will outline a plan to provide a short to medium term solution to our current dilemma with minimal disruption to our neighbours.

the struggle for survival



FOOTBALL LEAGUE AND CONFERENCE GROUND CRITERIA

Ground criteria were introduced at the Football League AGM in June 1995. The document listed a number of facilities required for membership and we struggled in several areas to comply. The main problem was the minimum capacity requirement set at 6,000 for third division clubs. Underhill's capacity had been reduced by our local authority from over 10,000 to 6,000 and then, after £250,000 worth of safety improvements in 1994, further reduced to just over 3,000. A further £750,000 expenditure has brought our capacity back up to a max 5,500 (using a large temporary stand to make up the capacity on the south side).

In January 2000 Barnet FC reached the top of the third division. Shortly after, we received a letter from the Football League threatening expulsion at the end of the season if we did not increase our capacity further, something we were unable to do in our existing land footprint. The pressure to find an alternative site was increasing and morale at the club was deteriorating.

The performance of the team reflected the general mood, but with relegation came less stringent requirements to fulfil, and ironically the club was given a temporary lifeline. Although Underhill stadium fulfilled all the existing Conference Criteria it still was not a sustainable option, as the Conference were about to adopt the Football League Criteria in 2004.

We were promptly banned from the LDV Vans Trophy, excluded from promotion and then, last season, told we would not be allowed to compete in the play-offs. All we ever wanted to do was play our football!

the struggle for survival

SEASON 1999/2000

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barnet	22	13	5	4	33	22	44
Rotherham	22	12	5	5	31	14	41
Darlington	22	11	6	5	29	16	39
Swansea	22	11	5	6	22	14	38
Northampton	22	11	4	7	24	17	37
Torquay	21	10	5	6	26	21	35
Peterborough	20	10	4	6	28	22	34
Plymouth	21	9	7	5	28	22	34
Hartlepool	22	10	3	9	28	22	33
Macclesfield	22	9	6	7	32	29	33
Halifax	22	9	4	9	23	25	31
Rochdale	21	8	6	7	18	14	30
Southend	22	8	5	9	29	32	29
Lincoln	21	7	7	7	32	32	28
Brighton	21	7	6	8	30	26	27
Cheltenham	21	7	5	9	18	19	26
Hull	20	7	5	9	20	22	26
Exeter	21	7	4	10	23	27	25
York	21	6	7	8	20	27	25
Mansfield	20	6	5	9	25	29	23
Shrewsbury	22	6	4	12	21	34	22
Carlisle	22	4	7	11	19	35	19
Chester	22	4	4	14	19	40	16
Leyton Orient	20	3	5	14	14	31	14

FROM PROMOTION HOPEFULS...

SEASON 2000/2001

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brighton	46	28	8	10	73	35	92
Cardiff	46	23	13	10	95	58	82
Chesterfield	46	25	14	7	79	42	80
Hartlepool	46	21	14	11	71	54	77
Leyton Orient	46	20	15	11	59	51	75
Hull	46	19	17	10	47	39	74
Blackpool	46	22	6	18	74	58	72
Rochdale	46	18	17	11	59	48	71
Cheltenham	46	18	14	14	59	52	68
Scunthorpe	46	18	11	17	62	52	65
Southend	45	14	18	13	52	52	60
Mansfield	45	15	13	17	63	69	58
Plymouth	46	15	13	18	54	61	58
Macclesfield	46	14	14	18	51	62	56
Shrewsbury	46	15	10	21	49	65	55
Kidderminster	46	13	14	19	47	61	53
York	46	13	13	20	42	63	52
Lincoln City	46	12	15	19	58	66	51
Exeter	46	12	14	20	40	58	50
Darlington	46	12	13	21	44	56	49
Torquay	46	12	13	21	52	77	49
Carlisle	46	11	15	20	42	65	48
Halifax	46	12	11	23	54	68	47
Barnet	46	12	9	25	67	81	45

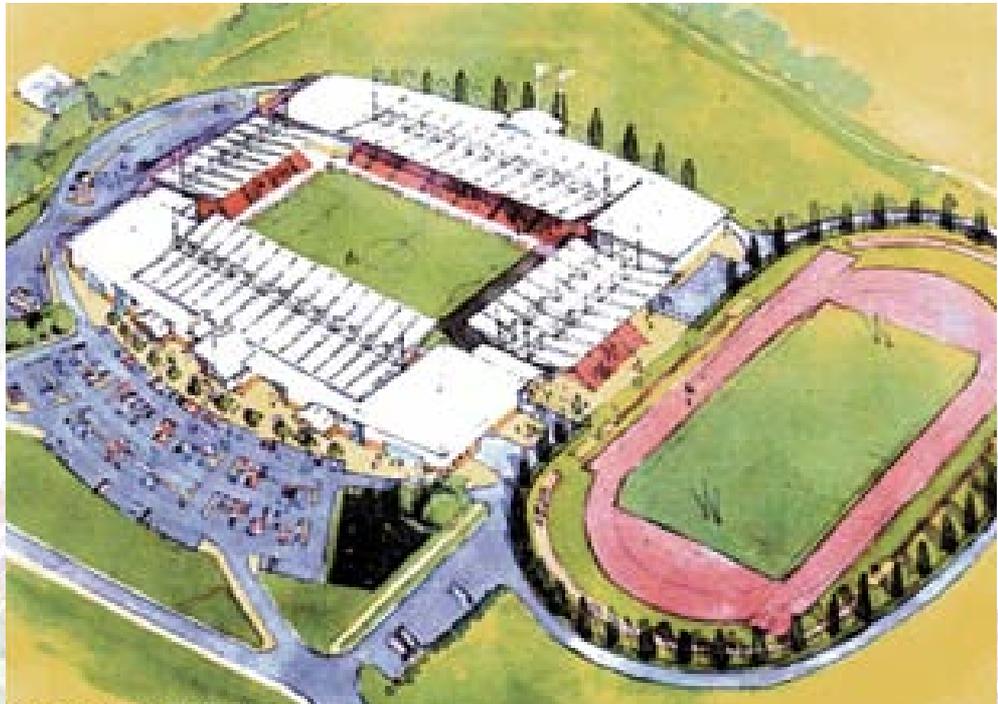
TO RELEGATION



THE EFFORTS TO CHANGE

As far back as the mid 1990's the club has been acutely aware of the issues needing to be addressed and has actively sought to resolve them, but with frustratingly little result. This is despite hundreds of thousands of pounds spent on planning and professional fees, with success often so close only for hopes to be shattered at the final stage.

Copthall is a name now synonymous with these efforts, with an application for a new stadium working in partnership with others failing at a public enquiry. Subsequent attempts to develop existing facilities at the site also failed, with all concerned despondent at the lack of political will.



ORIGINAL COPTHALL FOOTBALL, ATHLETICS AND COMMUNITY STADIUM

the struggle for survival



An intensive search for a satisfactory site remained on going, with forty-five possibilities investigated in the borough but few satisfying strategic and local planning requirements. One possibility did emerge that raised expectations for a short period, and a planning application was prepared to develop the Hendon Football Club ground and facilities at Claremont Road.

An ingenious design evolved from the restrictions of the site area, which enabled a ten thousand seat, fully serviced and compliant stadium to sit comfortably in its context with little negative impact on neighbours. However, this scheme was removed from the planning process prior to public consultation because land issues could not be satisfied to the agreement of all stakeholders



SHARED 10,000 ALL SEATER STADIUM FOR BARNET FC AND HENDON FC ON CLAREMONT ROAD SITE

In desperation, further discussions continued with Barnet Council whilst the club contacted neighbouring authorities for site alternatives. All concerned were now aware that time was realistically running out for Barnet FC, and at this point the council put forward an option via the local newspaper to build a new stadium south of the club's existing site. Although initially sceptical, the club commenced talks to explore the additional land requirement for a fully compatible stadium at the Underhill site. It was generally accepted by all interested parties that if alternative suitable accommodation were provided, then the adjacent Scouts, St.John Ambulance and Cricket Club could be moved. This would free the land for a small facility, ensuring the long-term survival of the football club. Barnet Council came up with conceptual options and these were put to the Greater London Authority for comment prior to a formal application.

the struggle for survival



Discussions centred on land designation and opportunity for 'trade-off' in terms of occupancy of the Green Belt immediately South of Underhill. The GLA proposals recommended a greater land take for the scheme to ensure that the massing of the new stadium was predominant to Barnet Lane on the Cricket Ground, keeping it away from the rear gardens in Fairfield Road. The St. John Ambulance and Scouts were to be relocated inside the stadium and the cricket club moved to an alternative site acceptable to them.

Importantly, the old stadium was to be demolished save for one stand for 700 spectators, with new changing facilities underneath for use by schools and local youth teams for hosting community cup finals etc. The club formally agreed with all the agencies that the whole site would be designated as Green Belt, providing a green amenity zone between houses and the east of the stadium.

With this clear direction from the GLA, approval in principle from all stakeholders and relocation sites agreed, work began on designing a new stadium south of Underhill



PERSPECTIVE OF NEW STADIUM AT SOUTH UNDERHILL awaiting public inquiry



PITCH LEVEL

BASEMENT LEVEL

SOUTH UNDERHILL, CROSS SECTION OF LARGEST STAND

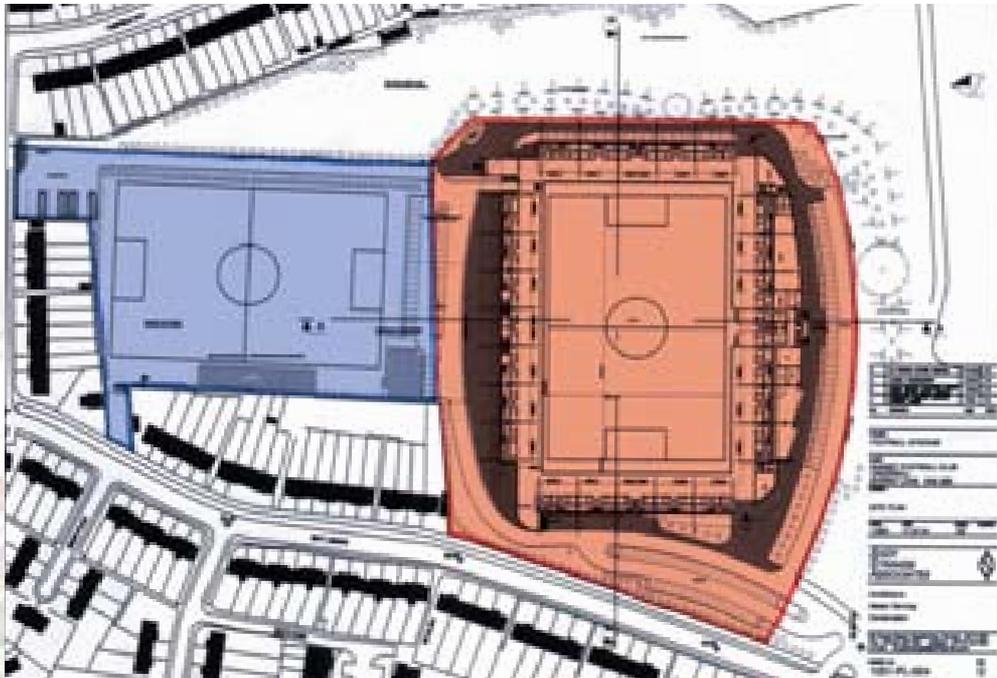
the struggle for survival



The design made full use of the site conditions and reflected the history of both club and the area. The building represented a quality architectural contribution to the landscape and would be something for the Borough to have pride in.

The application was approved by the Area Planning Committee in February 2002 and supported by the GLA, but as there was a departure from the local plan the application had to be reviewed by the Government Office for London (GOL). It was understood that approval was a formality, given the level and range of support for the scheme, but local elections in May 2002 delayed the GOL response.

The club suddenly found itself in the middle of a local election battlefield - with the then ruling Labour/ Liberal Democrat administration supporting the scheme and their eventual successors, the Conservative Party, opposing it.



EXISTING UNDERHILL (BLUE) approx 3.5 acres
SOUTH UNDERHILL (ORANGE) approx 6.5 acres

Whilst the Club appreciated the support of the previous Council Administration, it must be stressed that they hold no political allegiance whatsoever and are disappointed that they have been drawn into the obvious animosity that exists between the parties.

Land issues and local politics shattered dreams yet again, when the new incoming Conservative administration maintained its opposition to the South Underhill scheme, thus preventing the project from continuing. There will undoubtedly be expensive legal debate over the peculiarities of this for some time, but this is overshadowed by the more pressing concerns of the football club's future.

the struggle for survival



THE CURRENT POSITION

In June 2003 the club received an unlikely lifeline. The Football League reduced the minimum capacity entry criteria from 6,000 to 4,000, rising to 5,000 after promotion; good news at last! This change in the regulations allows the club much needed breathing space, but does not fully resolve the problem. There still remain criteria regarding the slope that require it to be straightened within 3 years of promotion.

The difficulty is that the whole stadium runs at an equivalent gradient. If the slope is straightened then the stands and terraces fall out of alignment. The stadium would have to be demolished and rebuilt, in which case it would have to be built to the highest standards of the Green Guide (Safety at Sports Grounds). This cannot be done on a small site such as Underhill, which is in green belt and closed in by housing on 3 sides. But at least we have a minimum 3 years grace should we be promoted.



VIEW OF EAST TERRACE SLOPING IN LINE WITH UNDERHILL PITCH

The problems associated with lack of facilities for the Club extend further than just those associated with the stadium. Despite efforts to find alternatives in the borough, we currently have to hire a public facility in Potters Bar for first team training, school facilities in Enfield for youth training and the ladies team has to train and play their home matches in West London at Hanwell Town. We also struggle to find pitches for coaching courses and after-school clubs.

the struggle for survival



Potential Solutions

Barnet FC wishes to continue to represent the London Borough of Barnet and its community with pride. An essential part of achieving this goal involves embedding ourselves in the fabric of our community, and that means facilities in the borough.

In order to do this we need to consider the following-

- a) Improvements to our existing site at Underhill.
- b) A site on which to construct a fully compliant new stadium in the future.
- c) A training ground for use by our first team, ladies team, and for community coaching.
- d) An academy to develop boys and girls football.

The club wishes to work in partnership with the council to identify and secure solutions to our short, medium and long-term aspirations. Importantly we also want to ensure that as part of this process, appropriate community benefits are incorporated in the proposals.

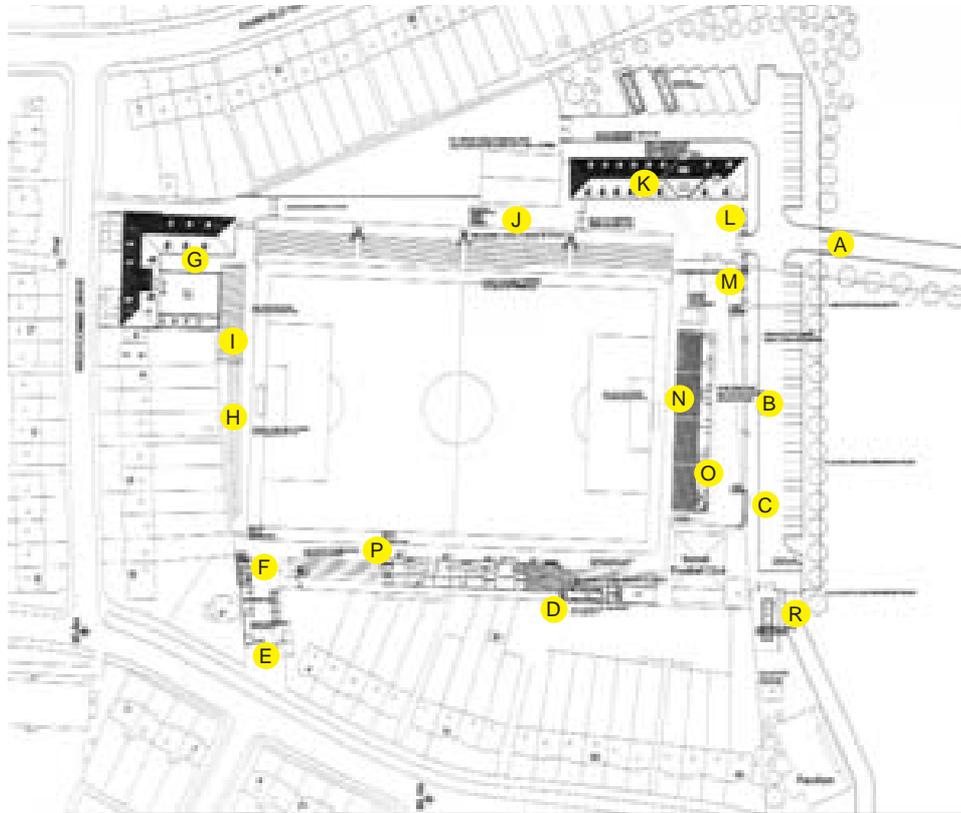




a) IMPROVEMENTS TO UNDERHILL STADIUM

The club and their architects have been in discussions with the Football Licensing Authority to find ways in which the existing facilities can be adapted for compliant use in the short to medium term. The scheme developed will mean expansion to the south and east encroaching to a small extent upon the land used by the Cricket Club, and also requiring the relocation of the scouts.

potential solutions



UNDERHILL IMPROVEMENTS (Note: this plan is indicative and subject to planning changes)

Key to plan main features-

- A) New access and emergency egress from south.
- B) Matchday parking for referees, players and officials only.
- C) New turnstiles for Main and existing Family Stand.
- D) New toilets and improved catering facilities.
- E) New turnstiles and entrance in Barnet Lane.
- F) New toilets and catering facilities.
- G) New segregated entrance for visiting supporters to include new club shop, offices, toilets, bar, catering, disabled facilities, steward briefing room, police control room and first aid.
- H) New roof on existing terrace.
- I) New visitors stand with disabled provision.
- J) New segregation and access at rear of East Terrace.
- K) New bar and catering building with toilets for East Stand and Community Hall.
- L) New turnstiles for East Terrace Home supporters.
- M) New turnstiles for South Stand Home supporters.
- N) New Family South Stand with disabled provision.
- O) New toilets and catering facilities.
- P) Electric plant rooms and segregation.
- R) Pedestrian egress and access.





This plan already has the support of both the Cricket Club and St. John Ambulance, and we are presently arranging a meeting with the Scouts to ascertain their requirements. The new council administration has also previously indicated support for the modest expansion of our existing site. Additional land would be made available on a long term lease at an appropriate value, which would reflect the club's community benefits.



VIEW OF UNDERHILL FROM THE SOUTH AFTER COMPLETION OF IMPROVEMENTS

The club proposes this temporary measure in as sensitive a manner as possible, with much effort put into landscaping and general enhancement whilst still fulfilling other operational requirements.

b) NEW COMPLIANT STADIUM FOR THE FUTURE

The necessity to find a new site for the future is paramount. The above improvements to Underhill will inspire confidence from the football authorities, and hopefully gain us some critical support whilst seeking dispensation from the ground gradient criteria. We are confident that if we have plans for a new stadium in place, then the authorities will allow us the necessary time at Underhill while we bring those new plans to fruition.

The current Conservative Council administration has made clear their objection to the South Underhill Stadium proposal, despite our substantial investment and previous council support. If this is to be taken away from us then we will require firm confirmation of council assistance to find a satisfactory replacement.

potential solutions



c) TRAINING GROUND

Full-time professional footballers train most mornings and some afternoons. This creates a unique opportunity to combine facilities for use by the club during the day, schools coaching in the afternoon and by the local community in the evening.

The Lansdowne Boys Football Club leased the Quinta and Barnet Grange sports facilities in Mays Lane until a few years ago, when they agreed to surrender their lease to the council in order for us to develop the site into a training complex. The buildings are currently derelict and the pitches in a state of disrepair.

In consultation with our Football in the Community subsidiary, we have drawn up plans to show how the site could be developed to include indoor and outdoor facilities - with the land made available by the council on a long term lease which would reflect the improvements to be undertaken and community access.

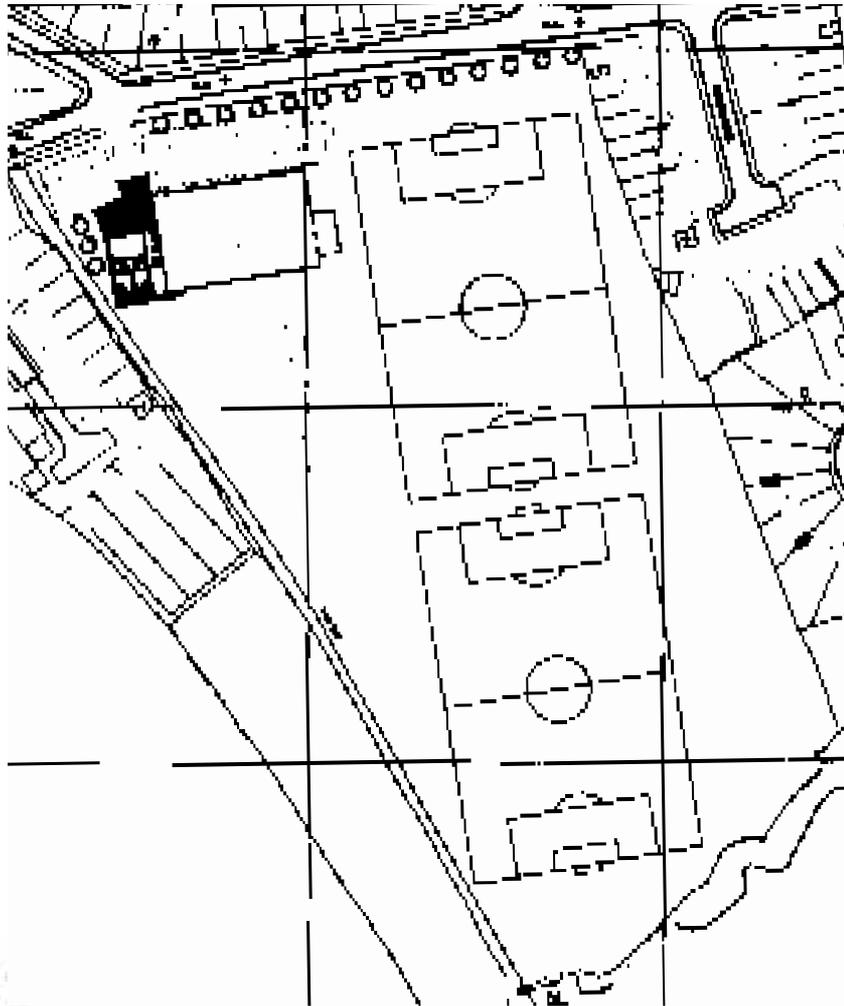


VIEW OF QUINTA DEVELOPMENT FROM MAYS LANE

potential solutions



The sadly derelict pavilion at the Quinta site would be replaced with a sleek, modern sports facility building. At its core will be a multi-purpose games hall for club and community use. Other facilities will include a state of the art gymnasium, changing, lecture and training rooms with potential accommodation for community directed needs.



PITCH LAYOUT AT QUINTA

The fields at Quinta would provide for two full-size and two five-a-side football pitches of the highest quality, and the smaller adjacent Barnet Grange site would be utilised for outdoor fitness training.

potential solutions

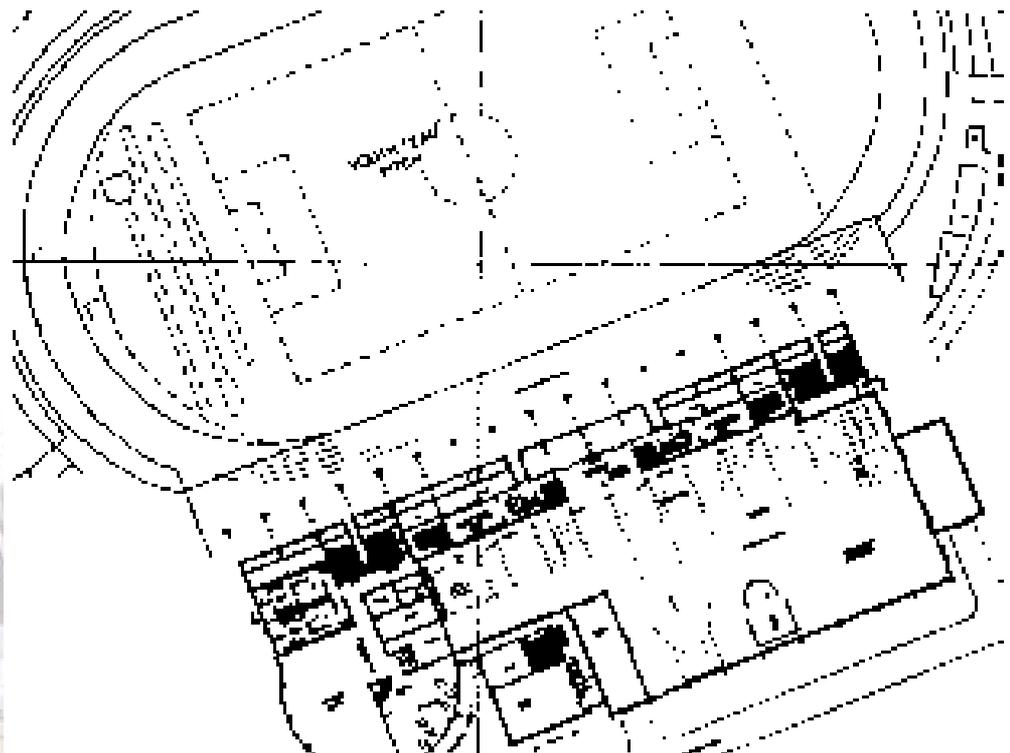


d) FOOTBALL ACADEMY AND SPORTING CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The club previously recognised the potential of Cophall for use as a borough sports academy, and incorporated this concept in their new stadium proposals. Opposition to the new stadium plans were generally focused only on the stadium use and most residents, including members of the Mill Hill Preservation Society, stated at the public inquiry their general support for the sports academy principle.

The proposal offered the potential for the council to free themselves of the annual £400k subsidy - which was their priority at the time. Plans were prepared to redevelop the main stand at Cophall to include new changing facilities and state of the art training space and equipment. This proposal also included full athletics provision with extensive indoor facilities for both training and competition. This facility was not exclusive to either the athletics or football club, as it was understood that the operator would respond to the local community - including local schools and other organizations, as well as respecting the needs of all individuals.

A key factor in the development was to enhance public space and go beyond the provision of standard structures loosely linked by basic requirements. Therefore other elements became integral to the scheme, including health and fitness facilities, sports clinic, public venue opportunity, and a large public atrium to orientate visitors to the building and provide a space for general interaction and relaxation.



NEW COPHALL SPORTS ACADEMY AND ATHLETICS STADIUM



Plans were prepared and submitted to the council but were later withdrawn while the planning application for South Underhill was determined.

Since the withdrawal of our plans, we understand that the council is now considering relocating Hendon FC to Copthall. We are clearly disappointed about this given that our proposals would have invested more than £4million in the site, relieved the council of significant annual running costs and provided a range of new community facilities. We would like to continue discussions with the council about this matter.

potential solutions





Moving Forward

The directors of Barnet FC invest their time and money in the club, not for financial gain but because it is their local community club. It has existed for over one hundred years and the site and footprint of the stadium has remained almost unchanged in that time.

Recent serious disasters in football have meant that a more structured and professional approach has had to be adopted by clubs. The necessary improvements in stewarding and facilities, along with legislation for ladies and disabled, create a severe financial burden.

The directors are willing to invest their own personal time and money in order to develop what is needed but are unable to raise the money to purchase brown field sites where they have to compete with commercial developers.

This proposal has identified sites that can be provided by the council, which the club can develop to meet all necessary requirements, incorporating community use and the use of other sports clubs. All the sites in this proposal are either derelict or in need of investment and improvement, but these same proposals can be applied to other sites.

The importance here is the adoption of the overall principle – we appreciate that individual proposals may need fine-tuning to ensure that they meet the needs of all parties.

There has been an uneasy relationship between the club and the current administration over the last eighteen months, largely as a result of the new council's misunderstanding about the club's intentions and past relationship with the previous council administration. We would like to reiterate that there is no party political allegiance held by either the club or its Chairman. The sole desire is to achieve what is best for the club in its community.

Barnet FC is a great PR asset for the council, and a great asset for the community; it should not be allowed to just wither on the vine. Sport should not be allowed to become a political issue and, as in the past, the club is willing to give various concessions to the council in return for support.

To enable the club to raise finance for these projects, we will need to acquire sufficient interest in the land on favourable terms. In return we are prepared to offer the council a range of community benefits via our non-profit-making subsidiaries, which include support for schools and the disadvantaged.

The club does not have the time, inclination or resources to play politics. If Barnet FC is to continue then we will require cross party support at all levels to ensure the continuity of any development programme.

We urge the council and everyone reading this document to support our objectives in full. We specifically ask that the council set aside past differences with the club and give our latest proposals full support, so that we can move forward in a new spirit of cooperation and trust.

If we fail in our task to secure support for these proposals and are eventually unsuccessful then we will accept our fate and may well have no alternative other than to move out of the borough.

Barnet FC belongs to Barnet. You have to decide whether to support it or lose it.



Key points

- BFC is a community club and great PR asset to the borough.
- Changes in football legislation have more than halved our capacity at Underhill.
- We barely meet the minimum criteria required in the short term.
- We cannot meet the long term criteria requirement without rebuilding the stadium
- Last season we were excluded from the LDV Vans Trophy, excluded from participation in the play-offs and denied any prospect of promotion.
- The club has been striving for a solution to its problems for 10 years now.
- Our site has uniquely been designated Green Belt and despite nearly £1million in expenditure we have been unable to find an acceptable planning alternative.
- Currently our first team train in Potters Bar, our youth team in Enfield and our ladies team in Hanwell Town.
- Criteria changes by the Football League in June mean that we can now implement short-term improvements to our existing site at Underhill.
- We will still require a site on which to construct a fully compliant new stadium in the future.
- The Quinta and Barnet Grange site in Mays Lane would be an ideal training ground for use by our first team, ladies team, and for community coaching.
- Cophall Athletics Stadium could be improved to incorporate a sports and football academy to develop boys and girls football. Hendon FC could also play there.
- The club is happy to make various concessions for the benefit of the council and the community and undertake to raise the necessary investment in return for the council transferring sufficient interest in land.
- Barnet FC seek the support of the council and local community so that they may determine their future in the borough based upon the implementation of the broad objectives set out in this document.