



DONS REVEAL VISION FOR RETURN TO WIMBLEDON

Fans-owned club publishes its ambition to make the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium site the new home for AFC Wimbledon

7 August, 2012 – Football League 2 club, AFC Wimbledon has published its vision to return to Greater Wimbledon.

The Dons' aspirations to redevelop the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium centre around a plan for the creation of a 22,000 capacity stadium which will host sporting and non-sporting events for the wider community. Initially, the redevelopment will deliver a multi-purpose facility with a capacity of 12,000 which AFC Wimbledon can expand over time as it continues its extraordinary success on and off the pitch. The stadium will be part of a larger development which will help fund the stadium construction.

In a mere ten years AFC Wimbledon has gone from public trials on Wimbledon Common to achieve five promotions, culminating in a play-off victory in May 2011 that returned the name Wimbledon to the Football League. The ambition to move back to Greater Wimbledon has never been stronger for The Dons Trust (the not-for-profit company which owns the club) and the fans, who recently reaffirmed their desire to return to the Borough.

The Dons' vision is articulated in the club's response to the London Borough of Merton's 'call for sites' – which requested anyone interested in developing a land site in Merton to set out their ideas in writing to the Council.

AFC Wimbledon Chief Executive, Erik Samuelson comments: *"This is an important step in a journey we started some years ago. We have a long way to go and many major hurdles to clear but we want to build a stadium that is embedded in the community and operate it in an inclusive way. To realise that ambition we have developed a cohesive and well thought through strategy. AFC Wimbledon is proud of its prudent financial management, supporter participation, active*



volunteering and community engagement. All of this follows from our model of fan ownership. We are very grateful to Merton Council who have provided strong support for our aims and who have demonstrated over the last few months that they understand our needs and share our vision for the next big step in our growth.”

Erik Samuelson can be contacted for interviews on 020 8547 3528.

Commenting on the Club’s vision, Merton Council Leader, Cllr Stephen Alambritis said: *“We are delighted with the level of interest in the greyhound site and the investment potential for the borough. There is all party support for AFC Wimbledon’s ambition to return to their roots and come back to Merton. I understand the largest response to the consultation on sites came from supporters of AFC Wimbledon who want a football stadium with community facilities in the borough. Not surprisingly, they identified the site of Wimbledon Greyhound stadium as their choice of location.*

The council will now assess all responses received and work with local residents and landowners, and other interested parties, to find the best solution to continue the sporting legacy on the Wimbledon greyhound site.”

Councillor Stephen Alambritis can be contacted for interviews on 07958 139 498

The AFC Wimbledon submission is published in full on the [AFC Wimbledon website](#) and will shortly be published at [Merton Council website](#)

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About AFC Wimbledon

In May 2002 an FA Commission made the highly controversial decision to allow Wimbledon FC to relocate to Milton Keynes. The club’s fans believed passionately that a football club belongs in its community and so they decided to reform their club at the lowest levels of English football



and win their way back into the Football League, much as the original Wimbledon FC had done 25 years earlier.

AFC Wimbledon, owned and run by fans, has become one of the most remarkable football stories of modern times. In a mere ten years the club has gone from public trials on Wimbledon Common to achieve five promotions, culminating in a play off victory in May 2011 that returned the name Wimbledon to the Football League; it has bought a stadium (in a neighbouring borough); run extensive and highly innovative community initiatives which earned it a recent 'Big Society' award; and done all of this on a financially sustainable basis.

AFC Wimbledon remains a fan-owned club, via the Dons Trust which operates with the highest ethical and governance standards where many of its activities are carried out by volunteers reflecting the club's commitment to extensive community involvement.

About Merton Council

Merton is an outer London borough with a strong sporting heritage. The council has consistently supported the return of AFC Wimbledon to the borough, with three motions backing AFC's ambitions to find a permanent home in Merton passed since the current administration took power in May 2010.

In addition to its footballing heritage, Merton has the oldest cross country running club in the world, the Thames Hare and Hounds, founded on Wimbledon Common. Merton also has the oldest cricket ground still in use in Mitcham Cricket Green and is home to the oldest tennis tournament in the world in the Wimbledon Championships, formerly in Worple Road and now in Church Road. In terms of football, Old Central School provided a former pupils football team in the late 19th century. They played on Wimbledon Common and used the "Fox and Grapes" public house as a changing room. First called "The Old Centrals" this club became Wimbledon FC!

London Borough of Merton is situated to the south west of central London with a population of around 200,000. Three main town centres are Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. The area is predominantly suburban in character, with high levels of commuter flows in and out of central London. Merton benefits from excellent transport links and is the only London Borough to be served by tube, rail and tram services. The District and Northern lines both run through the borough, Tramlink provides connections between Wimbledon and Croydon via Mitcham and Morden, while numerous overground stations and bus routes provide easy access to central London and neighbouring boroughs. The borough enjoys significant amounts of green space – 18% of the borough is open space, compared to a London average of 10%. This comprises over 65 parks and open spaces.

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