The Dons Trust October 2010

SURVEYING WIMBLEDON FANS

In this document, you will find six "scenarios", as devised by the survey group during the summer, and assisted by the New Economics Foundation who have been engaged to help us using their Consensus Voting process. The group tackled a number of concerns it believed would be close to the hearts of their fellow Wimbledon fans, and the six scenarios set out here are the first public stage of what has come out of the group's work. They are presented in the voice and opinions of six different, fictional fans of the club.

You will find that you agree with the standpoints of some scenarios more than others, and the idea is that once most fans have had the chance to review the scenarios (and provide their own, if they feel that what the group has come up with is nothing like what they want for the future of the club and the trust), participants will put them in order, and this information will inform the next round of the process.

Don't be too concerned if your vision for the future is not exactly represented – the idea at this stage is to get a general impression of fans' priorities; the least popular scenarios will be weeded out, and the more popular ones combined and re-worked based on what comes back from this round. Then we will ask fans to vote again on this revised, smaller number of scenarios – the idea is that at the first stage, anyone can give their opinion – **but at the next stage, only Dons Trust members will be able to**. So this is a good reason for people to join the trust, if they want their views to be included!

You will see that at this stage, the main concerns have been limited to those of ambition, location, ownership and funding – detailed issues to do with how much of our resources should be used on community work have been omitted for now, to keep things from getting too complicated. The group also considered the implications of each scenario, but decided not to use too much real-life feasibility such as the implications of cost and availability at this stage, since the intention is to get an insight into what our fans really want without the distraction of what might or might not be possible right now.

We are inviting people to read these scenarios, and to send any different ideas to us during October – mid November. After that, we will redistribute the scenarios along with forms to allow people to put their preferences in order. None of this will be carried out in a hurry, so take your time thinking about it. The group will be in the bars before games, so please come and talk to us!

SCENARIO A - FAST TRACK TO THE PREMIER LEAGUE

"We need to be realistic and SELL THE CLUB to someone who can to get us back to WIMBLEDON and the PREMIERSHIP."

> As the biggest club in South West London, and to correct the FA's decision against us, our rightful place is back in the Premiership. We're kidding ourselves if we think we'll ever get back up the Football League and get that stadium in Wimbledon without the input of a rich benefactor. We need to wake up and smell the coffee, sell up and go back to being normal football fans again.

Key points of this scenario:

Ambition: Get back to the top by all means necessary.
Funding: Through a rich benefactor or a consortium who can build the stadium and pay for top-notch signings.
Ownership: Get rid of the hassle of all those SGMs and Dons Trust elections, sell our shareholding and get back to being proper fans.
Location: Back in Wimbledon (Upper Merton) where we belong. The consortium will have the tactical nous to deal with Merton Council and any transport and stadium planning issues.
Support and Community: Visibility of a new modern stadium, decent marketing and high streets selling our football strip across SW London, there's a huge untapped market out there that's just being serviced by Chelsea and Fulham at the moment.

SCENARIO B - FAN-OWNED IN KINGSTON

"AFC Wimbledon is a leading example of a FANS-OWNED club. We should strive to regain OUR LEAGUE PLACE while LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS at our current home."

We've had our club stolen once, we must never let that happen again! We should strive to correct the wrong done to us by regaining our league place and become an exemplar of what football supporters can achieve. We should build on our investments to date by remaining at Kingsmeadow, improving the ground only when absolutely necessary, and affordable.

Key points of this scenario:

Ambition: Get into the league; beyond that continue to be as ambitious as our funding / ownership model allows whilst recognising that any further growth may well be slow.
Funding: Largely as is; seeking sponsorships, donations and investment as far as possible without supplanting the Dons Trust's absolute control of the club.
Ownership: The Dons Trust ownership model is sacrosanct; additional investment by an individual won't bring financial benefits to the investor (as for the current Vice-Presidents).
Location: Upgrade KM as necessary to get into the league and maintain our status by working with Kingston Council on gaining the necessary planning permissions and to improve local facilities and access. We could upgrade to a 6,000 capacity stadium under our own steam – an acceptable size for League 1 & 2 requirements - thus ensuring our short- to medium-term future. We have come so far in 8 years. It is silly to make firm plans now for what lies beyond the next 15.
Support and Community: Continue with the current youth schemes. Look for long-term growth in both these schemes and the support base by incrementally targeting Merton, Kingston and then the rest of SW London.

SCENARIO C - PARTNERSHIP IN MERTON

"Wimbledon needs to go BACK to its HOME and build a club in PARTNERSHIP with MERTON COUNCIL and OUTSIDE INVESTMENT."

We should, in partnership with Merton, find a site which could have a league ground with an initial capacity of 8,000 to 10,000. The site should be capable of expansion to Premiership standard, but only when necessary: the central location and success on-the-pitch will attract the necessary outside investment. Focus is football first, but with active/aggressive community links.

Key points of this scenario:

Ambition: To get to the Premier League in an expandable stadium in Merton through evolution and steady growth without the need to overstretch ourselves.
Funding: *Stadium* – initially through joint development with Merton and other partners providing enabling development, later through attracting investors/further development of the site. *Running Costs* – Supporter base, sponsors and full exploitation of location of stadium and modern facilities.
Ownership: The Dons Trust/Merton Council retains majority share of the club and its assets. We can employ key appointees or lease out sectors when/where necessary.
Location: A suitable site in Merton, centrally located with good transport links.
Support and Community: Full use of the publicity a return to "Wimbledon" and a modern stadium will help attract and increase supporter base - and we will also benefit from full community links through partnership with Merton Council.

SCENARIO D - FAN-OWNED IN WIMBLEDON

"Wimbledon will never be a massive club. We should always stay fan-owned, and get back to WIMBLEDON."

We've always been a small club - even when we were in the Premier League. We're never going to be huge. We should focus on getting a small ground in Wimbledon. We should only push for promotion if we're confident that we can afford it.

Key points of this scenario:

Ambition: Cautiously ambitious - don't blow everything trying to get promotion
Funding: When the time is right, sell Kingsmeadow (while not forgetting about K's) to raise funds for a small stadium in Wimbledon.
Ownership: The Dons Trust ownership model doesn't change
Location: Look for a small ground in Wimbledon with some expansion potential - knowing we'll never be massive
Support and Community: Continue with the current youth schemes. Concentrate on the community of Wimbledon and Merton.

SCENARIO E - BEST STADIUM LOCATION IN SW LONDON

"'Wimbledon or Kingston?' is the WRONG question. It would be dumb to rule out one or the other when the logical thing to do is to look in both for the best possible site to secure the club's future."

Ending up with a small and relatively expensive stadium in Wimbledon would be a disaster, not a victory. Likewise, insisting on staying in a redeveloped Kingsmeadow for the sake of it makes no sense. It is the duty of the club to secure the best location for its supporters - and that could be anywhere in the club's catchment area.

Key points of this scenario:

Ambition: Hold true to the Wimbledon spirit. Be bold and ambitious, but NOT reckless.
Funding: Welcome an enabling development deal to fund the new stadium. After that, appreciate that in the place of one egotistical benefactor we have many supporters prepared to fund the club. If we focus on promotion and achieve it, get the ground we deserve, then support, advertising revenue and sponsorship will follow.
Ownership: Trust in the Trust model. Never sell out.
Location: The best site in our attending supporters' catchment area. For example, a 20,000 seat stadium near Tolworth could well be better for us than an 8,000 seater stadium in Wimbledon or a redeveloped Kingsmeadow.
Support and Community: Stop acting as if the only supporters who matter come from SW19. Many don't. Apply equal effort in Kingston, Surbiton and North East Surrey and gladly welcome new supporters and sponsors from those areas. Let's not cut off our nose to spite our face – instead aim to be the biggest club in south west London.

SCENARIO F - PARTNERSHIP WITH KINGSTON

"We should **work with Kingston** to first develop Kingsmeadow as far as possible, then **move to a new stadium nearby** as we move up the leagues"

We have already invested heavily into our current home to meet the needs of our rise up the football pyramid and it currently meets our needs. Extending in the short term to 6,000 capacity, if required, would be more cost effective than starting from scratch on a similar sized ground in Merton. We should reach out to the surrounding community and consider a new stadium nearby if we continue our rise up the leagues.

Key points of this scenario:
Ambition: Football first - to continue our steady progression up the leagues.
Funding: Work with Kingston council and its partners to find a home nearby, with enabling development, in the long term.
Ownership: New ground to be owned by Kingston council or its partners, with the ownership of the club being retained by the Dons Trust
Support and Community: Continue work in Wimbledon but reach out to a wider area to include New Malden and Kingston.

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Does none of the above come close to what you want? Then let us know what you think here, and return it to the club:

SCENARIO G - .....
I think.....

Key points of this scenario:
Ambition:

Funding:

Ownership:

Support and Community: