



## **Dulwich Hamlet Supporters' Trust**

### **Interim position statement – December 2014**

1. This statement formally sets out the interim position of the Dulwich Hamlet Supporters' Trust ('DHST') in relation to proposals by Hadley Property Group ('Hadley') to redevelop the existing Champion Hill stadium and provide a new stadium for Dulwich Hamlet Football Club on adjacent land.
2. DHST was set up in 2003 and is an independent, democratic, not for profit organisation aiming to secure a successful and sustainable future for Dulwich Hamlet Football Club. DHST proudly represents over 200 members, nearly 30% of the average attendance in 2013/14 – a level of supporter engagement that would be the envy of most league clubs.

#### Progress to date

3. DHST's previous formal position regarding the proposals was submitted on 27 August 2014 and followed Hadley's first consultation on their ideas. Given the limited information available and the uncertainty created by the parallel consultation on Greendale Fields by Southwark Council, at that time the DHST concluded that it was too early to fully establish that the plans would secure a thriving club for the future. However, DHST was keen to engage positively and proactively with all relevant parties to achieve the best possible outcome.
4. Since the August 2014 submission, members of the DHST board have actively engaged with representatives from Hadley, fellow supporters, local Councillors and others from the local community. In particular, we have focussed our energies on:
  - understanding the impact and influencing the development of Hadley's proposals;
  - ensuring that the club is considered as part of Southwark Council's future plans for Greendale Fields by encouraging all supporters to respond to the Council's consultations;



- ensuring that there is improved engagement between the Council and Hadley to consider properly the option of a comprehensive plan for Champion Hill and Greendale Fields that could benefit local residents, the community (including supporters), and the football club.
  - actively champion, alongside the football committee, the value of the club as a genuine community asset that brings together and welcomes all sections of the community.
5. DHST is pleased that this engagement has proved highly successful, with notable positive gains being :
- the clear messages given by the local community that Southwark Council must include the football club as an important element of their plans for Greendale Fields.
  - the results of the survey of fans has influenced the design of the new stadium.
  - a highly successful non-league / Kick it Out / pay-what-you want day, delivered alongside the football committee, that broke the record attendance at the current ground and anti-homophobia initiatives at subsequent games.
6. DHST intends to continue with this work into 2015. DHST would formally like to recognise the work of representatives of Hadley and thank them for the open and collaborative way that they have approached the evolution of their proposals. It is hoped that future discussions will progress in a similar fashion.
7. DHST hopes that Southwark Council will deepen its engagement with us next year, as it reworks its plans for the area.



## Present position

8. As published in our [updated objectives](#), DHST wants Dulwich Hamlet to be a leading example of a financially sustainable football club, owned by supporters, with a secure long-term home in East Dulwich. In order to deliver on this, the proposals for the ground must be considered as a holistic package, which DHST views as broadly falling into **three parts**:
  - consideration of the **ground and associated facilities**;
  - **security of tenure** on the land where the ground and its facilities will be developed;
  - options for **fan ownership**
  
9. Each of these three parts cannot be considered in isolation as they are interrelated. The importance of considering the proposals in this holistic way is best illustrated by looking at how the current ground arrangements, barely 25 years after completion, have failed to serve the best interests of the club and the community over the longer term:
  - The ground facilities (originally designed to provide an income for the club) have proved difficult to maintain and have deteriorated quickly (although how much of this must be attributed to mismanagement in the past is debatable).
  - The short term succession of leases for the club to use the ground and the Astroturf on Greendale Fields has left the club at risk of eviction and without a stable home.
  - And finally, the ownership model of the club has previously left control of our future in the hands of people who do not appear to have always acted in the best interests of the club. This brought an absence of transparency that has given supporters no say or information about how the club has been managed and no accountability where there has been evidence of mismanagement.
  
10. DHST will work with Hadley and others to ensure that the final proposals do not repeat these mistakes. DHST's interim position on the detail of each of the three parts, based on information currently available, is included as an **Annex** attached to this statement.



### Next steps

11. In the short term, DHST will continue to seek to influence the evolving position in relation to the three parts identified in paragraph 8 of this statement. Once there is a sufficient level of clarity on the three issues, the board of DHST will poll our members on whether DHST should formally support the proposals.
  
12. To help our members decide, a report will be provided from the DHST board that will make recommendations in relation to the three key parts (i.e. the ground and associated facilities, security of tenure and fan ownership). DHST are also exploring cost effective options for having the proposals independently assessed, and will provide any such report to inform the poll. DHST will also invite Hadley to formally set out their offer to supporters in each of the three areas.
  
13. If the outcome of the poll indicates that DHST should support the proposals then this will be adopted as our formal position, subject to there being a high degree of legal and practical certainty that the proposals on all three parts will be delivered as promised.



## Annex

### **DHST's interim position on the detail of the three parts, based on the information available to date.**

#### Ground facilities and associated facilities.

- a. DHST's aim is to ensure that the proposed ground facilities would be of a suitable standard for Dulwich Hamlet Football Club to compete at national conference level and offers room to grow. Of equal importance, the ground facilities must ensure that the club can continue to provide a great and distinctive match-day experience for all.
- b. DHST's view is that ground designs are progressing in the right direction, with some resolvable detail outstanding – namely, provision of cover at both ends and greater flexibility within the bar area to enable it to operate successfully on a match-day and to potentially operate as a fully functioning pub for the local community at other times. Further assessment of the proposals is required to understand whether the amount of land given over to the new stadium will give the club room to grow in the future.

#### Security of tenure

- c. DHST's aim is to ensure that the proposals give Dulwich Hamlet Football Club a secure home for the long term future. This would be best delivered through a share of freehold or a secure lease of at least 99 years. DHST is unlikely to recommend support for a short term lease, such as the 25-year lease that was previously provided for the Astroturf, as this would not provide the security of tenure that is needed for the club to have a sustainable long-term future. This is currently the subject of negotiation between Hadley and Southwark Council. DHST will continue to lobby both parties for a resolution on this prior to submission of a planning application for the new ground.

#### Fan ownership

- d. DHST believes that in the future, Dulwich Hamlet Football Club should be owned by the fans. An important part of this includes understanding clearly how the club would be run on a day to day basis, and ensuring that the mix of uses and users of the facilities will ensure that the club is financially sustainable. DHST will continue to seek clarity on these issues and is currently exploring different models of ownership. The DHST board intends to



hold an event on 15 January 2015 for all supporters to “ask the experts” about the benefits of fan ownership. We will announce further details on this event once all the details are finalised.