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FAO: Claire Hodder  
Corporate Estate Manager  
The Heineken Company

9 August 2019

Dear Ms Hodder,

## **PROPOSAL REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE OLD SPOTTED DOG GROUND, UPTON LANE, LONDON E7**

Further to correspondence you have had with Andrew Barr, we wish to make the following proposal concerning the future of the lease of the Old Spotted Dog Ground.

### **Who are we?**

We are a community benefit society, Clapton Football Club Limited, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Previously, this type of company was called an “industrial and provident society” and our purpose is to serve the broader interests of the community, in contrast to co-operative societies that serve the interests of members. In our case, this is to provide sporting activities and facilities in Newham and surrounding boroughs.

The society was set up in May 2018 by the growing number of supporters who had attended the ground since 2012. The decision of the previous leaseholder, Newham Community Leisure, to enter into voluntary liquidation in 2017, despite the growth in popularity and attendance, was a signal to us that something was fundamentally wrong with the management of both the charity and the club it is closely associated with.

This is why the overwhelming majority of supporters, as well as the Life Members of Clapton Football Club, decided to re-establish the club under transparent, democratic control. As well as owning the club’s registered company name, we own the trademark on it and on its historic logo. We have also set up and are custodians of the Clapton Football Archive at the Bishopsgate Institute in the City of London. All our Life Members have been involved in football at the Old Spotted Dog Ground since the 1970s and one, John Sharpley, has family links dating back to 1910. Our oldest member, Martin Silver (who is also on our board), remembers attending games at the ground as a child in the later 1940s.

Our men’s first team plays in the Middlesex County Premier League and our women’s first team in the Greater London Women’s Football League, under the name “Clapton Community FC”.

## **What are we proposing?**

We have an existing company ready to take over the leasehold, named the Old Spotted Dog Ground Trust – a company set up by some of our current members in December 2014 for this current eventuality. We are in the process of making some minor amendments, with the assistance of lawyers from the Football Supporters Association, to its articles of association so it becomes a wholly-owned subsidiary of Clapton Football Club Limited.

This means we can act quickly to return the ground to regular community use as soon as possible. The intention is to subsequently apply for charitable status.

We are proposing that this subsidiary holds the lease and its directors have devolved responsibilities to manage the ground, under protocols and governance procedures agreed by the democratic structures of our community benefit society.

Clapton Football Club Limited would appoint directors both internally and more widely from the local community in Newham, as a positive way of genuinely reaching out to those who are marginalised and unrepresented because “age, income, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, religious or moral belief” (an aim that is set out in our Club Rules).

The ongoing legal action involving Newham Community Leisure will continue, in order to ensure that the warehouse on the site, purchased with funds from Sport England in the 1990s for community use, is not sold off. This is an important part of the Old Spotted Dog Ground’s long term sustainability and the warehouse is part of the “asset of community value” registration agreed by the London Borough of Newham in 2017, preventing any sale before the local community is able to prepare a bid to buy or lease it.

The liquidation and winding up proceedings are expected to reach a full hearing in November 2019 and we are confident on the basis of the evidence that our Life Members, who brought the case, will win. If they do, they are in a position to transfer any assets to a suitable body with charitable aims and have agreed to talk to us about how to merge or transfer ownership. This would mean any charge against them for unpaid ground rent would pass to us.

In the short term, we also propose a Service Licence Agreement whereby, in order to protect the Old Spotted Dog Ground from damage, illegal occupation and in order to allow both sides to prepare for full leaseholder status, Heineken grants us access to the ground and its facilities.

This would enable us to maintain its upkeep, undertake repairs, obtain a new alcohol licence and allow fundraising and community activities to take place (even though hosting football matches is not possible until final agreement has been reached). This saves Heineken from shouldering the burden of responsibility for long-term security costs.

## **Why work with us?**

Whilst we consider ourselves as the “true” Clapton Football Club, in purely financial terms we have also proven in the space of little more than a year that we can run a sustainable, member-owned business with a clear community focus:

- We currently have total assets of £120,656, almost entirely represented by cash in the bank or at hand. This includes £34,295 in operating reserves and £50,000

invested over a one-year fixed term.

- Before the prospect of this proposal emerged, we have a projected income for the season from July 2019 to June 2020 of £55,992. All items of income and expenditure are published every month on a transparency page on our website.
- We currently have over 1,400 fully paid-up members.
- We are an FA Charter Standard club with two competitive teams: a men's team playing on Saturdays and a new women's team playing on Sundays. Every week we also have a children's session and a mixed ability training session aimed at older women and non-binary players.
- Attendances at home matches for our men's first team last season averaged 447 and ranged from 220 to over 1200 supporters at our final game. That is more than ten times both the current tenants of the Old Spotted Dog Ground and significantly higher than many clubs at a far higher level.
- At an average game, our current ground-owners Match Day Centres take over £1200 at the bar. However, the added promotion and publicity we can bring to running a bar ourselves represents a significant opportunity for increasing sales, particularly with work to clear the beer lines and restore a functioning draft dispense system (currently the bar at the Old Spotted Dog Ground only sells cans).
- We would expect alcohol sales of at least £30,000 over the course of the season from match days alone, leaving aside the use of the ground for other events. We have a number of members with experience of running successful football club bars, including a member of our board who formerly ran the Leyton Orient Supporters Club bar.
- With the Old Spotted Dog Ground in the hands of a liquidator since April 2017, it has been impossible to seek the kind of development grants and investment, notably funds available for supporting grassroots football, that London's oldest senior ground really should attract with ease.

Even before this, the often chaotic finances of the previous leaseholder and the club closely associated with it – with new companies forming and then quickly dissolving – has hardly represented an attractive investment for the Football Association or other potential grant funders.

The creation of our community benefit society was made possible because of advice and guidance from Supporters Direct, now known as the Football Supporters Association. This continues to provide us with expertise, legal support and access to a range of potential grant opportunities. We also have active members who have years of professional experience in this field.

- The Old Spotted Dog Ground needs considerable work to ensure it meets minimum health and safety standards and to turn it into an attractive venue for visitors. Our members gave up their free time to undertake extensive groundwork on the pitch we used in Walthamstow for the 2018-19 season. As well as new funds, they represent a vital resource for bringing the ground back into regular community use as quickly as possible.

- This proposal has the support of the London Borough of Newham's directly elected Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz, our ward councillor Mas Patel and local MP Lyn Brown – see attached letters. A positive relationship with the local authority is vital to ensuring the future of the ground is sustainable (and for securing a new alcohol licence)
- Because of our community focus, we are also in a position to find a quick solution that enables another club, who could use the facilities on alternate weeks, to play at the ground on a more attractive basis than previous tenants have experienced up until now.
- Returning the Old Spotted Dog Ground to a member-run club, one that represents such a proud sporting history, will also provide positive news coverage for the freeholder. We have had extensive press coverage in local, national and international media and we are sure that the same outlets would follow up on this good news.

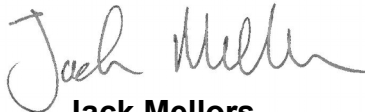
Enclosed is a summary of our projections for financial forecasts and cash-flow for years 1 and 2, in the event that we were able to take over the lease by January 2020.

Once you have considered this proposal, we would welcome a meeting to clarify any concerns and if you agree, to discuss the specific terms of our future relationship with Heineken. We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



**Kevin Blowe**  
Treasurer  
finance@claptoncfc.co.uk



**Jack Mellors**  
Secretary  
secretary@claptoncfc.co.uk

**Matchday Centre, Wadham Lodge Sports Ground, Kitchener Road, Walthamstow  
E17 4JP**

Dear whom it may concern,

I would like to express my views from a 'Landlords' point of view, as well as a personal view on Clapton Community Football Club.

I am the General Manager of Match Day Centres Ltd, at Wadham Lodge, which is the current home of Clapton Community Football Club. If CFC need any questions answered, whether it be fixtures, extra training, facility improvements, events, then i would be the person they contact. I dealt with their initial enquiry back in January 2018 for just a men's team and training. Since then, they have gone on to open an open age weekly kids training session, and bring in a women's team. From the start they have been a pleasure to deal with.

Of course the first point when it comes to the business would be the payments. As Clapton were a new club and hadn't worked with us before, we made the first payment a lot larger, as we do for all new clubs. Clapton had made this payment before we even had chance to send them the invoice! Since then, every single payment is made on time. From my experience, this is certainly not a common thing when it comes to football clubs at this level!

As a club to work with, Clapton have designated committees/volunteers for different areas, for example development, fixtures, match day, grounds committee. Some of these areas obviously crossover on certain things. This makes things a lot easier for us as a company to know who to contact when something comes up. Even when i may have contacted the 'wrong' person, they have always gone out of their way to find out the answer to my question. Also, the players and coaches are just as easily approachable. You would think that was standard for football of this level, but it certainly is not!

One thing Clapton CFC as a club have done, more so than any other club we work with, is helping with the grounds/facilities. Our site is very big, 4 full size grass pitches, along with 7 different sized 3G pitches. Then you have the surrounding areas of trees, bushes, brambles, etc. This is a lot to maintain with just one groundsman. Both the last two summers, Clapton CFC and their members have come in on their days off from their day jobs, and helped with the maintenance of our site. They have tidied up, cut down brambles/trees, made accessible paths and painted the dugouts and barriers. Not only did they do all this work voluntarily, the club also invested in their own scaffold stand. These improvements did not only benefit their home pitch, but also benefited us as a company and our 'product'. Towards the end of last season and over this summer, i have never had so many enquiries for the intermediate pitch, which to Clapton CFC fans is known as the Stray Dog.

I would also like to comment on the initiatives the club work on, and which their fans back. An average home game for them would see them collect 4 to 5 very large boxes of food/toiletries donated for a local food bank, free sanitary products in the Ladies toilets and a caterer for every home game that donates profits to charity. The football itself can be very entertaining, while the fans love making noise. There is no charge on the door, just a donation if you would like. They often raise money at games for charities too. The kids training session is a donation too! Kids training is often exploited within football clubs to help fund the club as a whole, and Clapton CFC allow you to pay what you can afford!

Within a few months of dealing with Clapton CFC, and seeing the values they uphold, on a personal level i thought it was a great club to be part of. Therefore i have now bought the home and away shirt, signed up as a member, and also donated on top too.

I am more than happy from a personal point of view, and as the 'Landlord', as well as proud to say we have Clapton Community Football Club at our facility.

Regards,

Mark Everid  
General Manager  
Match Day Centres Ltd

020 852 72444  
[info@matchdaycentres.co.uk](mailto:info@matchdaycentres.co.uk)

**Star Pubs and Bars**

06/08/2019

*Dear Star Pubs and Bars,*

I am writing to you to express my support for any move by Clapton Community Football Club (CCFC) to take over the lease at the Old Spotted Dog Ground.

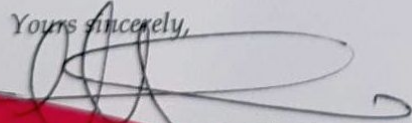
I am one of the elected Councillors for the ward in which the ground sits and have witnessed the impressive efforts by members and fans of the club to take back control of their club and its rightful home in Forest Gate.

I have attended several CCFC games at the club's temporary home in Walthamstow and have been amazed by the community spirit and organisation displayed by those organising everything from kits to programmes, and collections for food banks to activity for young fans. They have an all-inclusive approach and I am particularly impressed by their no-nonsense attitude against racism and discrimination in all its forms. They are a beacon of what a true community-run football club should be all about. I cannot praise them highly enough for this work!

I have also seen at first-hand how keen the club's members are to improve the community and physical landscape in this part of Forest Gate. I have met with fans with a view to improving the alley-way that runs between the football ground and pub, making it a safer and more pleasant place for all. This is an area that we as a Council have had problems with, and we would happily work with the Club to make further improvements should they take charge of the ground.

I strongly believe that an Old Spotted Dog Ground back in community ownership and at the heart of our community would be a boost to the area and I know that CCFC would be the organisation to pull this off. They are a stable and well-organised community-supported Club, who have an outward and engaging persona, who look to work with all parts of the community and would help in rejuvenating and making the whole area successful. Furthermore, I believe they would make an excellent tenant and as the local Councillor I am excited at the prospect of working with them in my area.

*Yours sincerely,*



**Councillor Mas Patel - @maspatel01**  
Forest Gate South Ward

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1000 Dockside Road  
London E16 2QU

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8<sup>th</sup> August 2019  
RF/MZ/ClaptonFC

Clapton Community F.C  
C/o Mr Kevin Blowe

Dear Mr Blowe,

**Re: Clapton Community FC and the Old Spotted Dog ground**

I was pleased to hear recently that there has been a positive and significant development concerning the Old Spotted Dog ground in Forest Gate, Newham.

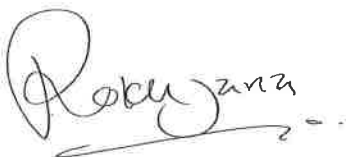
I'm aware that the prospect of Clapton Community Football Club being able to play in Newham and in its historical grounds has been a long-held ambition for the Club. This is an outcome that I am very much supportive of.

You'll know that under my administration, efforts that enable community and grass-roots sports including football to flourish in our borough are welcomed; and this will be a feature in our impending new sports strategy that will be published in the autumn.

In the meantime, I wanted to reaffirm my on-going support to the Clapton Community Football Club, especially in its efforts to once again use the historic grounds in Forest Gate as its home.

Yours sincerely,

Rokhsana Fiaz OBE



Mayor of Newham

[mayor@newham.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@newham.gov.uk)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lawson Mountstevens  
Managing Director  
Star Pubs and Bars  
3-4 Broadway Park  
South Gyle Broadway  
Edinburgh, EH12 9JZ

LB/BJB/CLPTN10

Dear Mr Mountstevens,

I write to you regarding the lease on the Old Spotted Dog Ground in Forest Gate, London E7.

I understand that Star Pubs & Bars are the freeholder and have recently taken control of the property due to unpaid rent from Newham Community Leisure Trust and Mr Vince McBean.

I have been approached by Clapton Community Football Club (CCFC), who you may be aware were recently founded by supporters of the historic Clapton team, and who very reasonably see the Old Spotted Dog ground as their traditional home.

Members of CCFC have been in dispute with Mr McBean over deeply concerning allegations about financial irregularities, mismanagement, and his ownership and control of the club.

I have supported these constituents, and others, in their efforts to ensure that the allegations against Mr McBean and his companies are investigated thoroughly and resolved swiftly by, variously, the Charity Commission, Football Association, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Insolvency Service.

I see the club as a genuine force for good in the local community. The club regularly assists local causes and groups that deal with issues from child poverty and homelessness to women's rights and refugees. I have heard excellent things about CCFC's work with local schools and the training they have provided for children, and was delighted to hear that they have recently started a women's team.

The club's momentum is extraordinary. Their fans clearly have a genuine passion, both for their team and for the community from which it sprang. They are admired locally as well as within the wider sporting community, and have rapidly built a positive reputation both nationally and internationally.

I would fully support CCFC, which is established as a community benefit society – or any subsidiary of this organisation – becoming leaseholders at the Old Spotted Dog Ground. I believe that this would be the best outcome for the community and would secure the long history of amateur football at the ground for the future.

CCFC's open finances show that they are financially responsible, and their strong community support makes them the obvious choice to safeguard this important asset for people locally and across London and the South-East of England.

I hope to soon be able attend Clapton Community FC's first true home game, back in Forest Gate at the Old Spotted Dog, where Clapton teams have played since 1888. Perhaps you would be interested in joining me?

Please do contact me if there is anything else that I can do to help CCFC's case or aid you in your decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lyn Brown', written in a cursive style.

**Lyn Brown MP**  
**Member of Parliament for West Ham**