



THE LENSURY

Business Case

Supporting proposals for a
Riverside Pavilion at
Lensbury Ltd, Teddington

August 2013

VRG Planning Ltd

www.vrgplanning.co.uk

Introduction

- 1 Lensbury Ltd has prepared this statement in conjunction with VRG Planning Ltd, in support of its proposals for a Riverside Pavilion. The statement seeks to explain why the facility is needed, the importance of the proposals to the future of the business, why this is important to the Borough and also to show how every effort has been made to minimise any impacts on the Metropolitan Open Land.

Background to Lensbury

- 2 Lensbury provides leisure, conference, hotel and events facilities. Many of the facilities are unique and represent an important asset to the Borough. Lensbury employs over 270 people and is a significant employer in the borough.

Changes in Lensbury's Membership

- 3 Lensbury has experienced continual annual falls in member numbers since the financial difficulties in 2008. Below is the grid highlighting the fall of members.

Membership Percentage Movement					
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
-0.90%	-1.90%	-0.07%	-0.07%	-1.20%	-1.24%

- 4 It is also noteworthy that the makeup of the membership has changed, with a reduction in non-family members.
- 5 The table below shows changes in the makeup of Lensbury's membership. The last category of members has fallen circa 6% between 2007 and 2012. The members who spend most at the club fall within this membership category. So the difficulty of reducing member numbers is compounded by the change in the type of members.

2012		2008		2007			
5,163	58.0%	5,205	55.0%	5,164	54.0%		
1,919	21.6%	1,842	19.5%	1,847	19.3%		
2,078	23.3%	2,631	27.8%	2,771	29.0%		
9,160		9,678		9,782		Total Members	

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- 6 The changes referred to above have resulted in a circa 15% loss in revenue, which represents a substantial reduction.

Difficulties Associated with the Restaurant Facility

- 7 The Terrace Restaurant is the only restaurant Lensbury has. It has to cater for ages ranging from babies to senior citizens. This makes it a complicated and high cost operation. The volume has declined by over 12%, due to the recession and the lack of space in the bad weather. Even though membership numbers have fallen consistently since 2007, the restaurant still cannot meet the requirements in a way that allows young members to run around without causing stress to those members who would like quiet. The restaurant at times has over 50 minutes waiting time for food services and people queuing for tables. The conflict of children who want enjoy themselves and other members who want to sit and have quiet relaxing time is causing both segments of the market to leave.

Potential Implications of the Trends

- 8 The trends referred to above are worrying and suggest that urgent action is need. If Lensbury's membership continued to decline at the current rate, it would be necessary to entirely review the business model. The Borough would risk losing some of the unique facilities that are offered and employment levels could also be impacted.

Lensbury's Analysis of the Cause

- 9 Lensbury believes that the changes in membership are partly due to a lack of indoor space at key times, such as winter, after school and weekends. There is strong evidence to support this. Letters have been received from members referring to the lack of facilities for children and the difficulties of separating adults and children within the indoor areas. Lensbury is also well aware of the difficulties due to feedback from its staff.

Lensbury's Proposed Solution

- 10 Lensbury believes that the only solution to the current problems is a new and dedicated area for families and children. There is not space to accommodate this in
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any of the existing buildings, so it is intended to deliver a new building, called the Riverside Pavilion.

- 11 The new concept would allow the young members from two year olds up to 16 year olds plus to enjoy themselves, without all the normal rules about noise, age and behavior, put in place to avoid disturbing other members.
- 12 The area would be designed with soft play zones for two years old to six year olds and then six years to 12 years. The children would be able to play and make as much noise as they want, without disturbing other people. The area will enable the parents / guardians to relax and enjoy the experience of bringing their children. The associated catering would be focused at members' needs and those of their guests.

MOL Impacts

- 13 Lensbury is mindful that its site is located within Metropolitan Open Land. It has considered every possible option as to how the requirement could be accommodated whilst maintaining the openness of the MOL. It has concluded that the best solution is to deliver the proposed facility in an area currently occupied by existing free standing buildings that can be removed.
- 14 It is considered that removal of the existing buildings will deliver a significant benefit, as they do not represent a positive feature of the site. In addition, the existing buildings cover a larger developed area than the proposed ones. It is also important to note that the area in question is well screened by existing trees.
- 15 As noted in the Design & Access Statement, historic mapping shows that the proposed development area between the trees was historically occupied by stables and associated hard standing, for a mansion that stood on the site. This is why the trees are set out as they are.
- 16 For these reasons, Lensbury believes that the area proposed for development is appropriate, taking into account the MOL designation.

Traffic and Car Parking

- 17 Lensbury's aims is to half the decline in membership numbers and then recover to pre recession levels. At the moment the numbers are down by 622 members. Consequently, the proposals would not lead to any problems with traffic and car parking.

Summary

- 18 Lensbury provides unique facilities that represent an asset to the Borough. It is also an important local employer.
- 19 Lensbury faces important challenges, in its membership numbers, the type of members visiting and in its ability to provide appropriate facilities for the full range of members.
- 20 The proposed Riverside Pavilion would represent an important step towards addressing the current issues.
- 21 If The Lensbury does not expand its ground floor facilities it will not be able to cease falling revenues and membership volumes, or try to return to pre-recession levels. Due to its high fixed costs, it would not be able to sustain the business model.
- 22 Lensbury is striving to continue as a unique facility of importance to the Borough and is appealing to the Council to assist in achieving this.