

Liverpool commits to Anfield redevelopment

Matt Cutler

Liverpool has confirmed its intention to drive forward with plans to redevelop its Anfield home into a 60,000-seat venue, with the announcement set to bring an end to a decade-long saga surrounding the future of the stadium.

The English Premier League club and Liverpool City Council on Monday revealed details of a new partnership that sees Liverpool commit to Anfield as part of a major regeneration scheme for the local area. The announcement came as Fenway Sports Group celebrated its two-year anniversary as owner of Liverpool – a period in which officials have wrestled with the choice of redeveloping the club's iconic home or building a new stadium. The latter option was the one favoured by the troubled regime of Liverpool's previous American owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett.

The redevelopment of Anfield is expected to cost around £150 million and would see its capacity boosted from the current level of 45,500 seats – an increase that will significantly boost its ability to compete against Premier League rivals in the match day revenue stakes. The mooted new stadium project at nearby Stanley Park was likely to have cost at least £300 million, a factor that has led club officials to increasingly sway towards the redevelopment option in recent months. Liverpool's managing director, Ian Ayre, maintained that any final decision about extending Anfield will be dependent on two main factors – firstly the support of the local community and secondly the ability to "navigate the complex planning landscape".

Liverpool has refused to completely rule out the prospect of returning to the idea of a new stadium, but Ayre acknowledged that remaining at Anfield is the club's No.1 choice. "If you build a new stadium, for example, one of the big challenges is that, depending on the capacity, you build 15,000 or 16,000 new seats - you don't get 60,000 new seats in a new stadium, you only get the difference," he told the club's official website. "That makes it very difficult to make it viable because the cost of building such a big new stadium doesn't work economically, particularly in this market. Added to that is the fact that I'd say it was very much the preference for our fans, the majority of our fans, and certainly for all of us. We've had some of the greatest triumphs in our history here, so it makes sense if there's a right solution that this is the place we should continue to play our football."

Work is now expected to commence in 2014 and Liverpool's Mayor, Joe Anderson, added: "Liverpool FC's announcement that their preference is to expand its stadium provides further certainty for the community, adds increased momentum to the work which is already going on and paves the way towards a new blueprint for the area. We have had numerous constructive discussions with the club and have listened to their vision for the future and explored how that could tie in with and complement our own plans for the future of Anfield. I'm delighted that we've now reached this milestone. It means we can now work together with confidence to deliver a new era for Anfield. A future of high quality housing, first-class retail and leisure facilities, and at the heart of it all, a world-class football stadium, playing host to one of the world's most famous clubs."

Fonte: SportBusiness International. Disponível em:

<<http://www.sportbusiness.com/news/186482/liverpool-commits-to-anfield-redevelopment>>. Acesso em: 16 Oct. 2012.