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BUYER / INVESTOR INFORMATION

*"A remarkable journey
to represent one of UK and Europe's
most exciting football led opportunities."*



NEVER SAY DIE

Contents



Club Background

Hartlepool United Football Club is one of the oldest clubs in the world. It has been on a truly remarkable journey for more than a century and is steeped in heritage with origins that trace all the way back to 1881.

The Club, as it is officially now known, was founded in 1908 when the teams of ‘West Hartlepool’ and ‘Old Hartlepool’ amalgamated to form Hartlepoons United Football Athletic, which in turn became Hartlepool United Football Club (HUFC).

The Club joined the Football League to play its first game at Victoria Park on 2nd September 1908, beating Newcastle United 6-0.

During its 100+ year history HUFC has attracted and developed some of the best players and managers in the game including the great Brian Clough OBE. It has seen the full spectrum of highs and lows including league promotions and relegations, cup wins and losses, and financial crises and resurrections. It is unequivocally a part of our English football history and identity.

While the Club's nickname is the Monkey Hangers - a story that links back to the Napoleonic War - the supporters are affectionately known as ‘Poolies’ and they are widely recognised as some of the most passionate and loyal fans in the game, perhaps reflecting the steel of the area that they come from.

Following an extended period of decline HUFC was relegated from the English Football League (EFL) into the National League (5th tier) and in 2018 found itself in financial crisis just days from liquidation, before current owner and Chairman Raj Singh stepped in to rescue the Club.

Since 2018 HUFC has gone through a substantial overhaul and transition. Investment into governance, staff and infrastructure have gradually reformed both commercial and footballing operations with a view of progression but also sustainability.

HUFC has subsequently enjoyed one of the most stable periods since its formation including gaining promotion back into the EFL in 2021 via the Play Off Final. In 2022 HUFC was successfully awarded Category 4 Academy status by the EFL in a key first step toward player development objectives. Both girl’s and women’s football programmes have been established alongside an extensive Community Foundation programme.

The Club's stadium and long-standing spiritual home is Victoria Park, which following a substantial new sponsorship agreement in 2022, is now officially titled the Suit Direct Stadium. Full stadium development plans have been progressed more recently.

Several high-profile individuals have affiliations with HUFC and often support in ambassador capacities including leading Sky Sports Football pundit Jeff Stelling who is also currently Club President, Olympic and WBO Middleweight Boxing Champion Savannah Marshall, Iron Maiden guitarist Janick Gers and the late American singer-actor Meatloaf.

In 2023 HUFC was relegated into the National League, an outcome that is widely regarded a result of the Club being promoted too quickly and where the Club never fully recovered from the unexpected loss of promotion winning Manager Dave Challinor. The relegation is genuinely viewed as a manageable set back in context of a longer-term project to sustainably move into EFL1 and is by no means summation of a huge amount of transformational work that has gone on behind the scenes since 2018.

Hartlepool United is a club with an incredible history and a journey that continues...

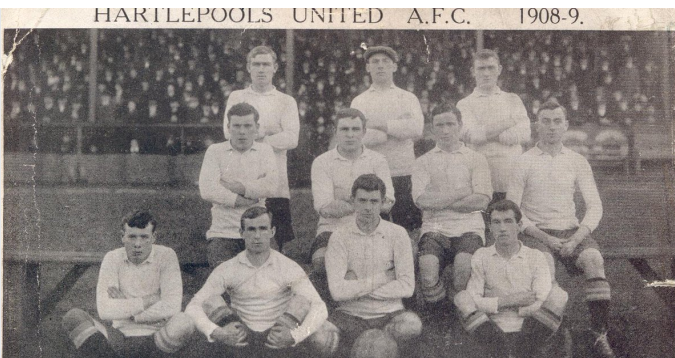


... The Club has a remarkable history and undoubtedly has incredible potential, we must unlock it in the correct way.

Raj Singh – HUFC Owner & Chairman

1908

The Club was formed and played its first game at Victoria Park against Newcastle united winning 6-0



1988

HUFC beat Manchester United containing Viv Anderson, Paul McGrath, Mike Duxbury, Lee Sharpe and Chris Turner 6-0 in a pre-season friendly



2018

Current Chairman Raj Singh steps in to rescue the Club from liquidation following an extended period of decline



2021

Following a Club overhaul and rebuild, the team are promoted back into English Football League in a dramatic play off penalty shoot out



Opportunity Introduction

Prospective buyers and investors are invited to meet and discuss one of UK and Europe’s most exciting and timely football-based opportunities.

This document serves to provide provisional information only. It outlines possible areas of project opportunity and consideration for buyers and/or investors including:

- 1. **Promotion to EFL1**
Targeting and accelerating promotion into English Football League 1 (potentially Championship).
- 2. **Player Development & Trading**
Developing a player trading operation for a targeted production of player assets.
- 3. **Stadium & Training Facility Development**
Developing a new c10 acre multi-purpose stadium site and securing a Championship class training facility.
- 4. **Media Platforms & Content**
A Club history and journey that alongside high-profile ambassadors could create media content and value.
- 5. **Women’s Football, Community Engagement, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**
Developing women’s football in line with rapid worldwide expansion and/or community led CSR projects.

Sequencing and prioritisation of the above have flexibility for change depending on buyer/investor drivers. Whilst the above are viewed as possible key considerations they are not exhaustive and other aspects exist.

The HUFC opportunity is proposed in context of both innate long standing Club assets but also following significant transformative work and restructuring since 2018. The Club has stemmed and gained control of longstanding historic losses that were being made to no end, providing a measured backdrop for any future investment.

HUFC is now ‘pump-primed’ and next stage objectives have been extensively benchmarked against historic Club performance and other EFL clubs. FY2022 delivered and proved a profitable EFL2 model, providing further tangible assurance that league status objectives are both realistic and sustainable.

In a relatively short period Hartlepool United could become a self-funding EFL1 club (with Championship potential), operating a best-in-class player trading model, training at a Championship class training facility and playing in a new purpose-built iconic stadium that has vastly diverse community benefit. It can complete a century long journey in an incredible next chapter with a marketable story to tell.



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What Hartlepool United have achieved since 2018 is remarkable.

The Guardian Newspaper



1. Promotion to EFL1

An opportunity to sustainably progress a football club into the English Football League and potentially the Championship.

Progressing the men's team into EFL1 or even the Championship is not a prerequisite for a sustainable HUFC - the Club can operate sustainably with a well put together EFL2 or National League operation.

The ambition to gain promotion into EFL1 is viewed as an opportunity to reach potential and to be pursued under the correct investment levels and guise. It is an incredibly exciting vision with multiple possible drivers including sporting fulfilment, financial return, content creation and community impact. Critically there is also an end-point of self-sustainability for HUFC in EFL1.

Championship league status is identified as an ambitious target however the Club has previously played in EFL1 and made EFL1 playoffs as benchmark, and without much of the infrastructure and investment that this prospectus identifies. HUFC could realistically progress to EFL1 upper table and as such gain a promotion. Recognition is made that a much higher level of owner investment would be required to sustain Championship status longer-term. It should also be noted that several clubs have operated as EFL1-Championship yo-yo teams, benefiting greatly from short term Championship status and funding.

Following significant overhaul, HUFC now has key assets and infrastructure in place or primed to support taking sustainable steps into EFL1. These include:

Football Performance

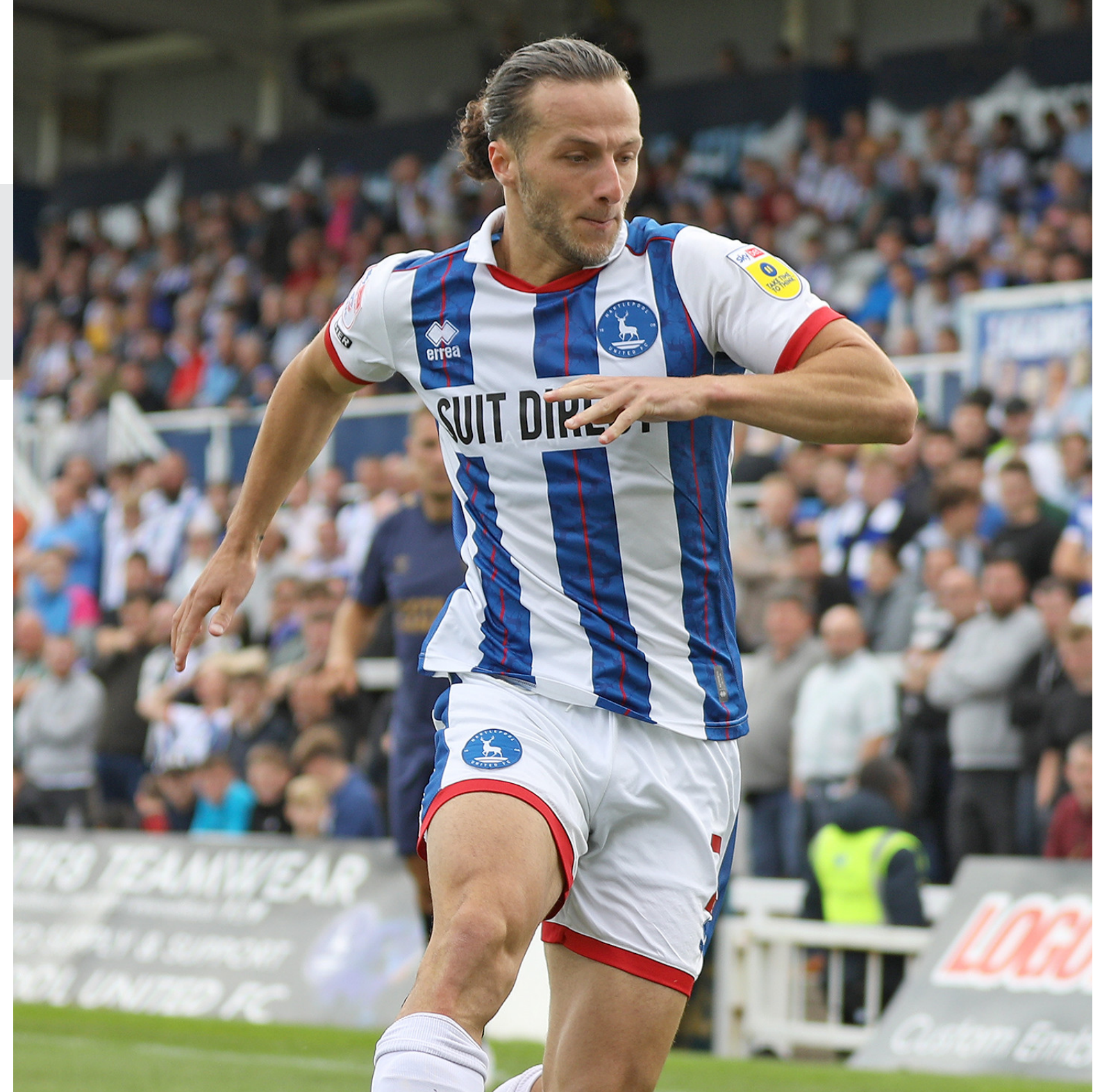
- Overhaul of football operations and staff with key FT and PT performance roles imbedded
- All player and staff salaries benchmarked and budgetary frameworks (per league) in place
- Player contracting frameworks and resource in place including FT football secretary
- Formal player recruitment process, resource and software implemented as of 2022
- EFL Cat 4 Academy status awarded in 2022 with self-funding education led model planned by 2025
- Designated senior football department resource including manager succession planning

Facilities

- Training: c£40m Championship class training facility in use with long term partnership potential
- Stadium: EFL1 ready c7700 capacity stadium in a town centre location with excellent access in use

Commercial Operations

- Overhaul of commercial operations and staff to support required financial and admin progressions
- Secured some industry leading appointments in key management and Board positions
- A single team town without other pro sporting competition and exceptional football demographics
- Best in class potential across ticketing, retail, hospitality, sponsorship and advertising
- EFL break-even model proven in 2021 and initial proof of concept for c£2.5m+ EFL1 playing budget
- History and heritage – a remarkable journey and story for fans, sponsors, investors to engage with



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Since 2018 the club has transformed itself. It is now positioned as one the most exciting and poised clubs in the UK.

Adrian Bevington - Former MD Club England and NED Hartlepool United



2. Player Trading

An opportunity to develop and deliver a best-in-class player development and player trading operation for the targeted production of player assets and value.

One of the key strategic opportunities for Hartlepool United is to add formal enhanced player development and player trading functions to its operation.

The Club has already seen ad-hoc success in these areas without priority or additional accelerated investment, which is perhaps an indicator to the potential. Examples include HUFC academy product Joe Grey who recently reached 100+ 1st team appearances and has scored 8 goals this season, whilst Brad Young was sold to Leicester City and Timi Odusina was sold to Bradford City both for notable fees.

The value in these areas can be several fold including creation of talent, reduced 1st team wages and fund generation upon trading. HUFC doesn't currently budget or rely on the value (like some clubs do with player trading), as such it is an added value opportunity.

There are currently 7 players in the HUFC squad with trading opportunity and interest, however that value could undoubtedly be higher. There are multiple examples of clubs in National league and EFL that have consistently developed and traded players with significant benefit.

Several factors exist as to why HUFC can develop a very successful player development and player trading operation, whether that be through developing local talent or bringing in out of area players:

- A sustainable Club model and football platform without player trading i.e. not a financial necessity
- A matchday environment and fanbase that is renowned, where players want to play with exposure
- Potential Championship class training facility, where players work and spend time Monday-Friday
- A North East location that has lifestyle and cost of living benefits for young up and coming players
- Access to 2 high quality detached Club properties for young player accommodation and welfare
- EFL Category 4 Academy status achieved in 2022 (CAT 3 viable) plus Club pathway also being built
- Geographically situated between 3 Premiership/Championship clubs (NUFC, SAFC, MFC) with CAT 1 academies and potential for players to move both ways, plus low HUFC counterpart competition
- Geographically with multiple local teams at lower league levels to provide outlets for loan players
- A Club playing philosophy and DNA that supports appointment of player developers as managers
- Formal first stage recruitment process and resource implemented in 2022

Joe Grey | 20 | Forward
HUFC Academy product
108 appearances | 14 goals



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Hartlepool really does have a unique and exciting set of ingredients when it comes to an ability to attract and develop young players.

Chris Trotter – Former Rotherham United Head Chief Scout



3. Stadium & Training Facility Development

A once in a generation development opportunity that can create an inspiring iconic town centre stadium site with transformational impact and legacy for the football club, the town and the region.

Hartlepool United Football Club and Victoria Park (now the Suit Direct Stadium) have become synonymous with one another for more than 100 years. They are regarded as cornerstone organisations and identities for Hartlepool as a town.

The Club has been working with Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) to progress development of the stadium site including political efforts. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was formally signed in 2021 between the Club and the local authority to initially resource the project in partnership – something that has not been achieved in over 15 years of stadium development talks under prior ownerships.

The stadium development has more recently been strategically positioned as part of a wider regional plan for town centre regenerations and socio-economic objectives, linking with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the new Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC). TVCA and the MDC have direct access to central government funding and an ability to help accelerate development projects through historic red tape.

The development has formally been included as part of town master planning and the concept has been taken through a formal planning pre-planning application process without objection.

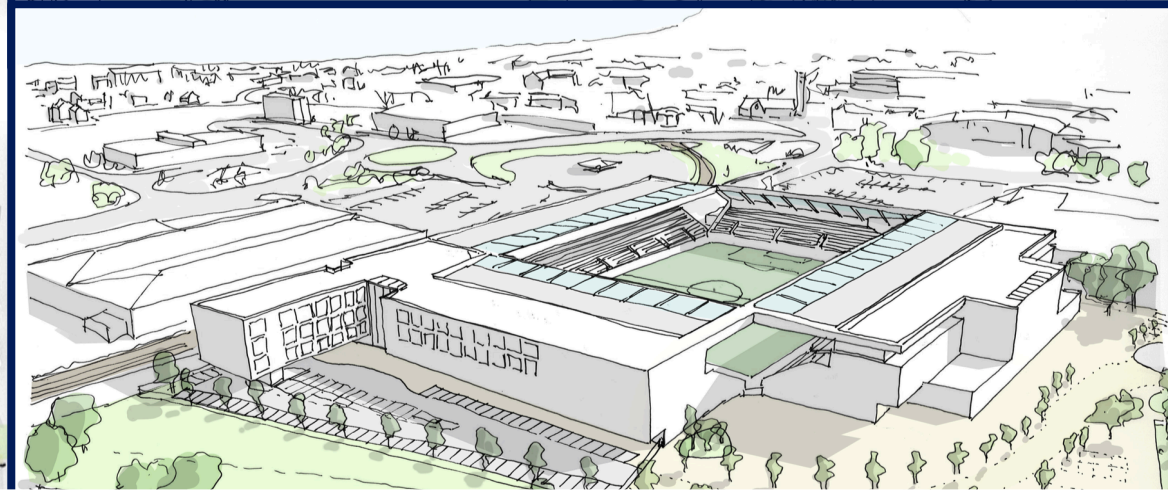
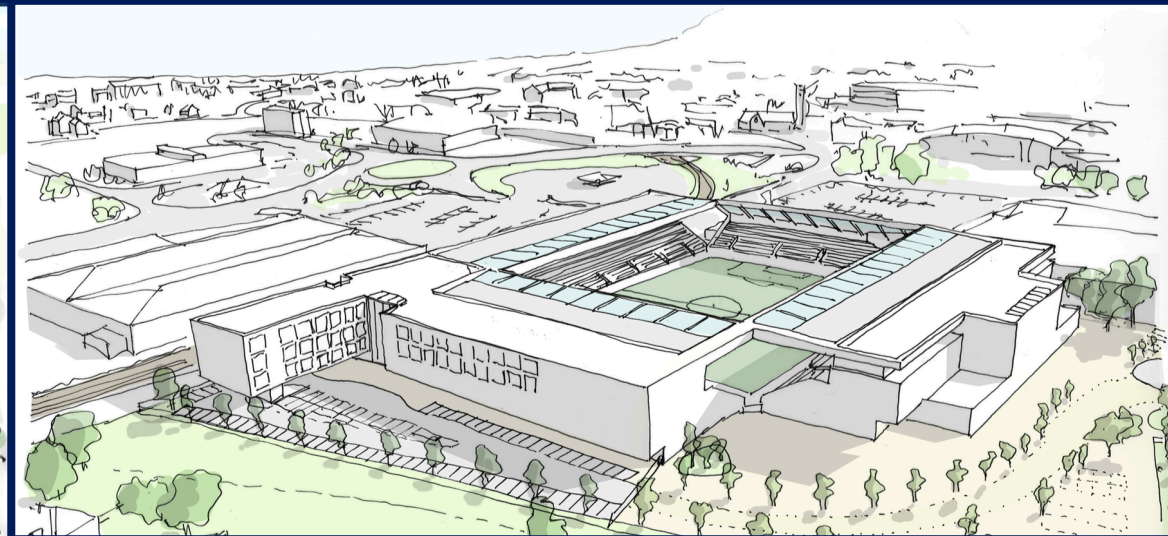
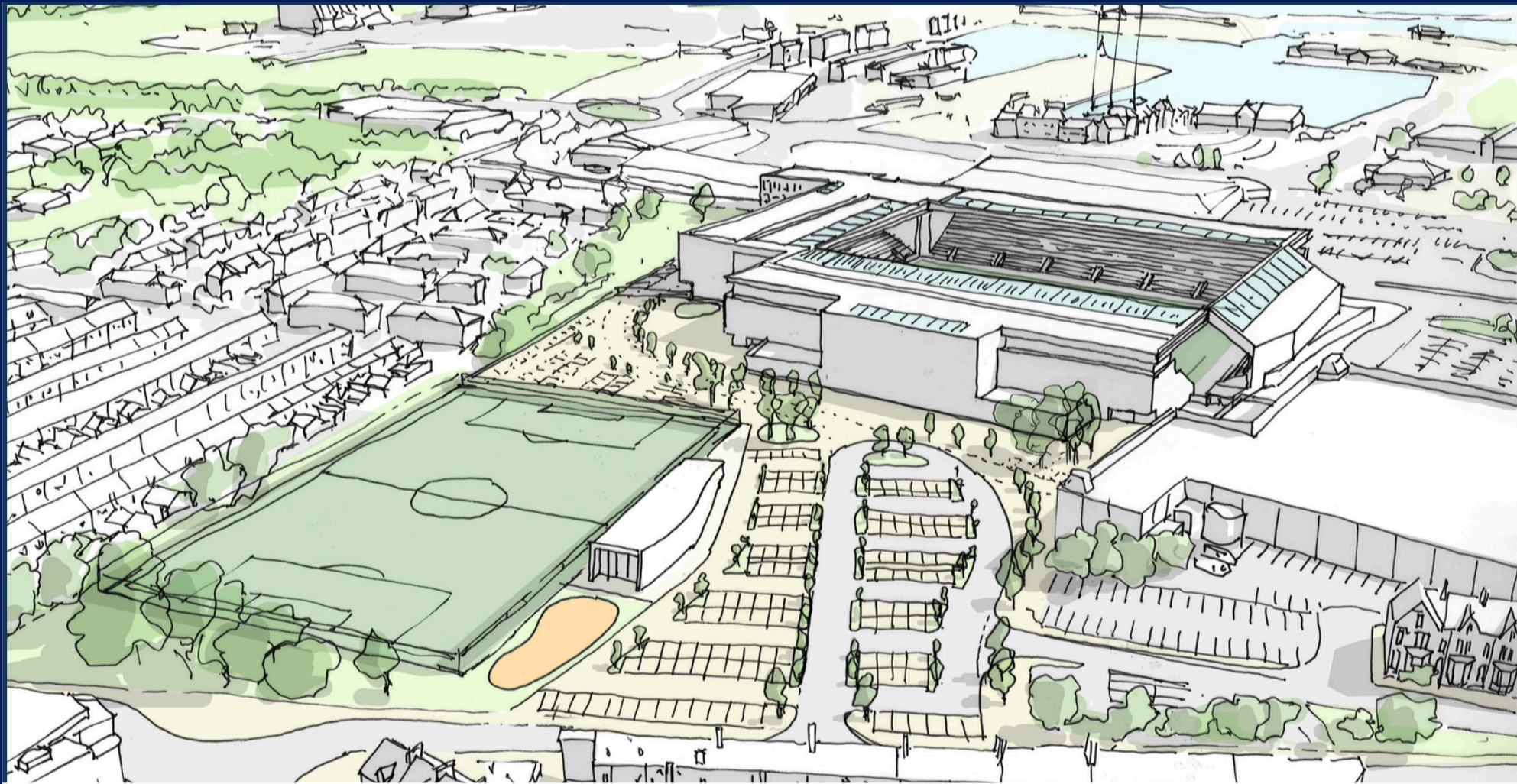
A total land assembly of c10 acres has been identified allowing space for a multi-purpose development. As well as becoming a best-in-class facility for professional football, the vision is for both a local community hub and a regional landmark that activates sport, education, health, business and events seven days per week.

The currently adopted parentship approach with HBC and TVCA may support access to significant capital funding as well as project delivery resource and expertise. Additionally, capital and operational partners have been scoped, engaged and aligned with health services, education providers, commercial operators and community programmes.

Aside from the stadium development, significant effort has also been put toward procuring a training facility solution. A partnership with Durham University was brokered and secured in 2021 that gives access to the new c£40 million Maiden Castle Sports and Wellbeing Park. The site is ideally located and accessible for the North East and initial heads of terms have since been outlined with the university for a long-term agreement which could secure a Championship class training facility for a fraction of the cost. The Durham University partnership also represents multiple ancillary benefits including R&D, shared staff resource, student internships and a global brand association.

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A development that will position the stadium as a centre piece in a site that would have vast socio-economic impact.
Shane Moore - Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council





Project 25: Stadium Village Development Concept

Key:

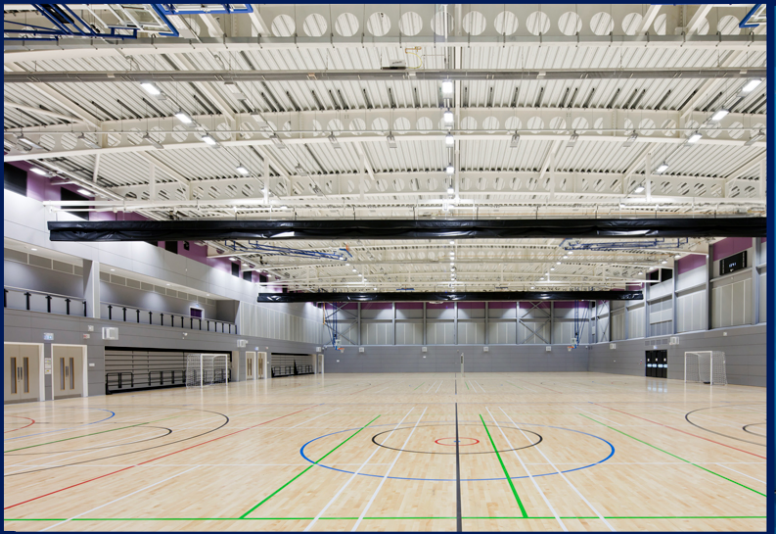
1. Stadium pitch (grass and Desso considerations)
2. c10,000 capacity stands with scalability
3. Hotel c80-100 bed 3-4 star
4. Commercial space including office, café, nursery, HUFC retail
5. Sports Bar & Cafe
6. Education space
7. Flexible hospitality, event and conference spaces
8. Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with changing facilities
9. Foundation & Sports Development space
10. Health & Community Services space
11. Cycle hub
12. Zoned car parking & landscaping

Early design concept notes:

1. An Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) on site is deemed crucial to operating a 7 day per week community site.
2. Commercial space that hugs the stadium footprint can reduce build cost and allow stadium led USPs e.g. stadium curb appeal, managed reception, pitch views, flexible meeting rooms, café/gym/creche use, etc.
3. Commercial space can attain views of both the stadium pitch and the marina waterfront if well designed.
4. Parking/access to be zoned and flexible to accommodate event days with opportunity to ingrate cycle hub.
5. Multiple green design opportunities including solar, RWC, EV, etc.



Training Facility – Durham University Partnership



4. Media Platforms & Content

An opportunity to develop innovative media content and value by telling the Club’s remarkable story, working with its high-profile ambassadors and shaping an exciting new chapter.

In a new era of media and communication platforms, clubs have unprecedented opportunities to access not only traditional localised supporter markets but also potentially wider global audiences. Notably in this new marketplace, media value and reach doesn’t solely correlate to the club’s league level or campaign investment level, where historically it might have.

Traditional barriers have been reduced or removed and to further capitalise clubs are increasingly producing off-field led content that sits in wider entertainment, documentary or even owner agenda classifications. Recent streaming examples of this include Wrexham’s series on Disney+ (National League), Sunderland’s series on Netflix (EFL1) and Newcastle United’s series on Amazon Prime (Premier League). Aside from streaming services there are a multitude of other communication platforms, including social media, where content can deliver messaging, engagement and ultimately value.

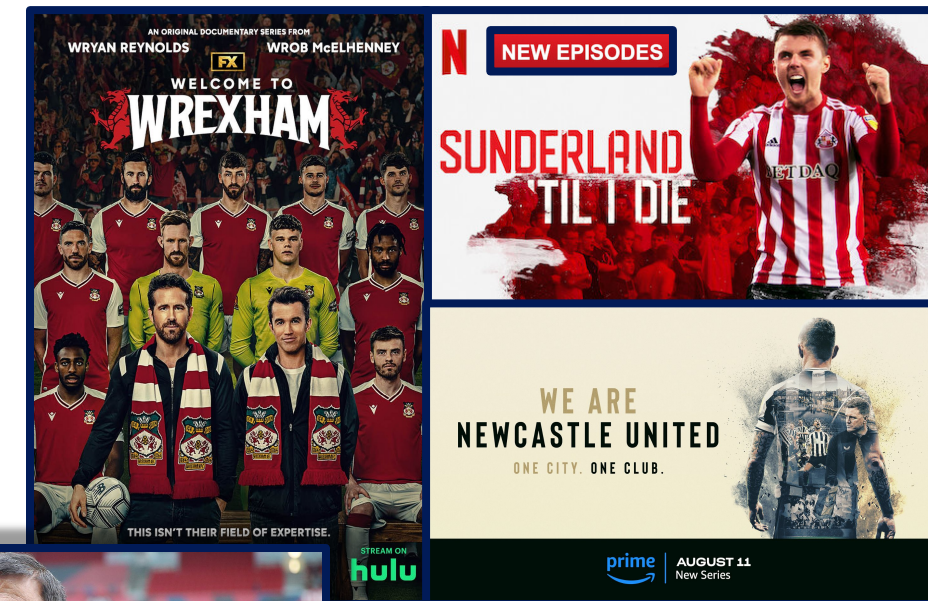
HUFC has some immediately available ingredients that as yet haven’t been fully developed or activated to create inventive media content and value. These are listed below and are in addition to any new owner-investor drivers or collaborations that might present further opportunity for content in a new HUFC chapter.

- HUFC is one of the oldest clubs in football with a remarkable journey and story to tell dating all the way back to 1881. It sits a renowned football region with following from some of the most passionate and characterful fans in the game.
- Several high-profile individuals have affiliations with HUFC including leading Sky Sports Football Pundit Jeff Stelling who is also currently Club President, Olympic and WBO Middleweight Boxing Champion Savannah Marshall, Iron Maiden guitarist Janick Gers and the late American singer-actor Meatloaf. Some of these individuals have supported in ambassador capacities, but no formal agreements are in place and any proposals would need to be discussed and agreed with them on merit.
- Current HUFC Chairman Raj Singh has a unique rags to riches background including his well documented upbringing as an ethnic minority Indian in working class Teesside during the 1970’s and 1980’s. As one of the only Indian owners of an English football club he has received approaches to produce content with view of engaging both UK and Indian markets.

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...Pools has such an incredible history and story to tell. I do feel that we are on the cusp of a very special next chapter.

Jeff Stelling – HUFC President & Sky Sports Football Pundit



5. Women's Football, Community Engagement, CSR

An opportunity to develop a women's football programme in line with the rapid global expansion of the women's game and/or multiple community led CSR projects and impacts.

Women's football is now one of the fastest growing sports in the world and the English game specifically has received some major springboards in recent years including an England Women's win at Euro 2022 and a World Cup Final in 2023. Fully professional teams and contracts with rapidly growing viewing stats and commercial values are seen at the top of the women's pyramid whilst participation levels and engagement have swelled at grass roots.

Over the past decade HUFC has established both a girl's programme and a senior women's team. Both are now well poised for further development. The Women's team has progressed to play in the North East Regional Premiership and like with the HUFC Men's team, there have been multiple geographical synergies with local Championship and Premiership clubs.

The fledgling work to establish HUFC women and girls football has been significantly supported by the Hartlepool United Community Sports Foundation (HUCSF). Harnessing the Club brand and the power of sport to engage, HUCSF has grown to become a registered charity with a full complement of staff that deliver a vast range of both sporting and non-sporting programmes across the town and region.

In its widest context HUCSF now works with the Police, NHS, Premier League, National Citizen Service, Armed Forces and HBC Food Network to deliver programmes in sports development, health, social well-being, education, training, employment, anti-social behaviour and crime. There are opportunities for HUCSF to be further scaled and for corporate partners or philanthropists to work in collaboration for meaningful community based impact.

HUCSF can also benefit the proposed new stadium development in a number of ways including: supporting capital grant funds for build; providing operational resource and expertise to activate a 7 day per week high footfall site; providing collaborations to attract proposed onsite health, education and business partners.



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The foundation has grown to deliver a large array of projects that make a real difference to the lives of people locally.

Keith Nobbs - Hartlepool United Community Foundation Manager





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