

Phase II of the redevelopment at Old Trafford Cricket Ground extends the scale and aesthetic language to the rest of the ground and will, when complete, provide a unique and spectacular home for cricket in the North West of England.

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In this article, The Point Project, as well as the renovations at Old Trafford Cricket Ground are first described by the client, Lancashire County Cricket Club (LCCC), and then by the designers, BDP.

Lancashire County Cricket Club's new 1,000-seat hospitality and banqueting venue, The Point, was officially opened by Andrew 'Freddie' Flintoff on June 27, 2010, at the One Day International between England and Australia.

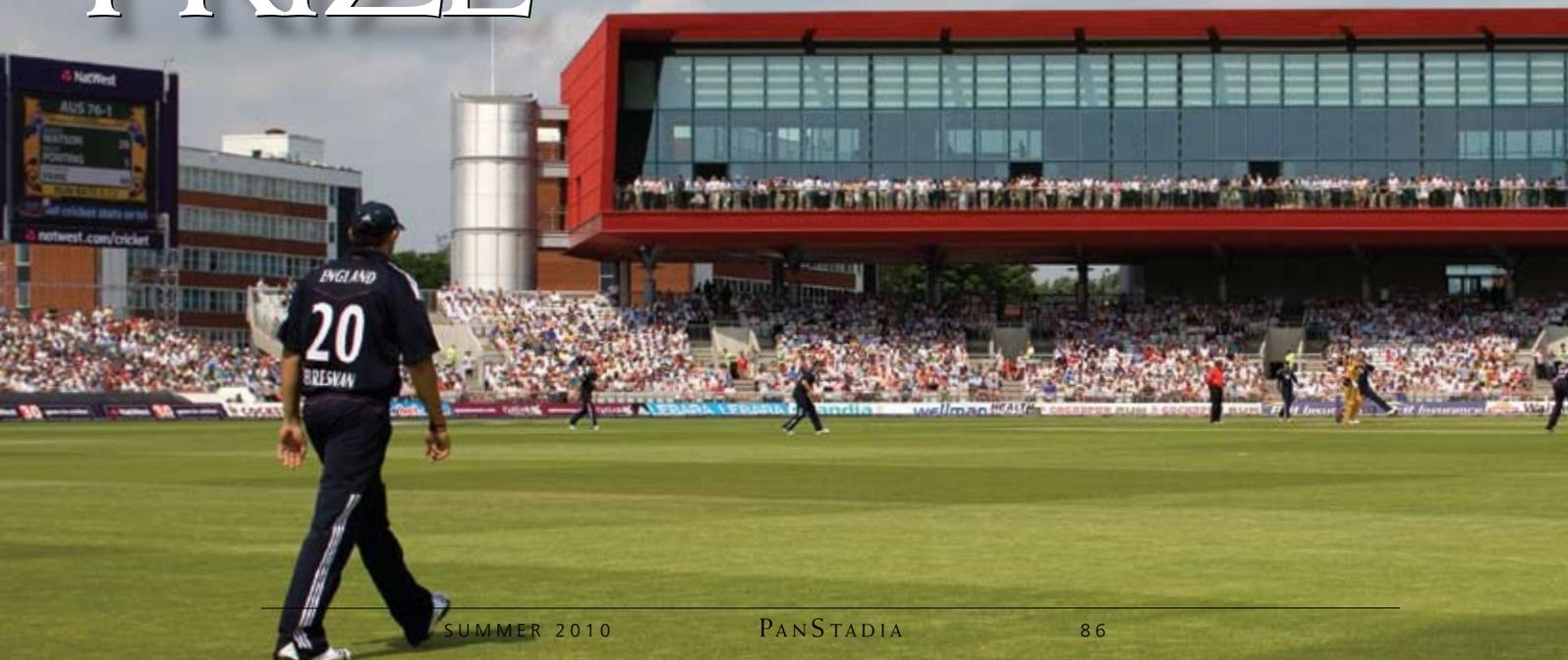
IMAGE: ©DAVID BARBOUR/BDP

The Client's Story — Geoff Durbin,
Commercial Director, LCCC

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hile each international cricket ground in the UK undoubtedly has its own unique challenges these days, there is one particular issue that is both fundamental and common to all; how to be financially sustainable in the long—term. The huge costs of maintaining the infrastructure necessary to achieve (and maintain) the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB's) minimum standards required for grounds to be granted the right to host international cricket, cannot be met simply via current cricket-based revenues. So every venue is looking at ways in which this problem can be overcome. Revenues from cricket are simply not significant enough to balance the books and clubs have found, often because of the ageing nature

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of their grounds, that even if they wanted to, “sweating their assets” is not always commercially viable.

LCCC’s approach to this financial challenge has been innovative and some might say revolutionary. A survey of the eighteen First Class Counties’ annual reports over the last decade reveals that LCCC — whose home has been the Old Trafford Cricket Ground for nigh on 150 years — has arguably been the most successful at generating income away from cricket, even before The Point had been completed. In fact, it was the knowledge gained through successfully developing this business that enabled the Club’s management to confidently formulate their development plans. The LCCC have built up a strong catering business on non-match days, as well as at major cricket events over the years, totalling around £3m turnover annually. The other notable successes have derived from the use of the venue’s 1,000-capacity on-site car-park, which through contract and ad-hoc sales would usually expect to bring in around £350k, but as it has become established as one of the UK’s top outdoor pop concert venues over the last decade, that figure increased sharply to over £3m.

The Club also had the foresight to commission a 68-bed hotel in 1997, with rooms overlooking the pitch, which they own and operate themselves, with useful six-figure profit contributions averaged each year since construction.

However, in spite of this relative success in business terms, other problems surfaced after the hosting of the epic 2005 Ashes series, which is remembered in particular because 30,000 people were locked out of the ground on the final day of the Test. The context of international match allocation changed at this time because the ECB decided that venues must enter a competitive bidding process for the right to host international cricket matches. This scenario saw the introduction of some new venues and much to the shock of the cricket world, Sofia Gardens in Cardiff successfully won the right to host an Ashes Test in 2009, with Old Trafford losing out. Looking back, although this was a massive blow to everyone at the ground, it acted as a catalyst for fundamental change. It became clear that the tired stadium needed completely re-developing, with a brand new vision and business plan to accompany it. This resulted in a new ‘Masterplan’ by BDP, with the ultimate objective of bringing the Ashes back to Manchester in 2013.

Masterplan for the Regeneration of Old Trafford

After an extensive process where a number of options were considered, including the possibility of moving to a new site, it was finally decided to completely re-build the cricket ground. The key features of the cricket pavilion being the only part of the old venue to remain in the £50m re-build. In order to fund this, a number of partners needed to be secured to deliver what has been termed the masterplan in a sports-led regeneration of the local area. Tesco was one of these partners, providing a significant proportion of the funding via a cross-subsidy involving the purchase of public land in order to build a new superstore a few hundred metres from the ground. Because of the complexity of these arrangements — which were clearly going to take some years to finalise — LCCC took what was a bold step of embarking upon an ‘enabling phase’ well before the outcome of the overall masterplan discussions had received funding and planning permission. The idea was to design and fund a 1,000-seat conference and events facility that would be a predominantly self-sufficient stand-alone business venture, which would underpin the shortfall in cricket revenue. It is hoped this will sit within a completely re-developed Old Trafford in a few years, but if not it will still work as a financially successful business in its own right.

Once this decision had been made, the Club came up with a detailed brief for the architects, BDP, which incorporated a number of fundamental ‘must-haves’ if the facility was to achieve its financial goals. The inspiration for which came from a temporary facility the Club used to erect for major cricket matches; a huge





The Point's design has been developed to enable the Club to provide highly flexible and technically advanced conference and banqueting facilities, capable of catering for groups of up to 1,000 people at a single sitting — a feature unique in the City.

IMAGE: CRAIG EASTON/LCCC

marquee adjacent to the boundary rope, allowing around 800 guests to dine before going out either onto a decking area or alternatively to reserved seats to watch the action. To defray the costs of putting up such a large marquee, the Club would sell a number of dinner events and conferences for a defined period either side of the cricket days. This proved very successful, and so the Club's commercial team realised that a permanent facility built along these lines would generate significant business.

From that came the bones of a brief for what is now known as 'The Point' — a conference and events facility to accommodate the 'magic' number of 1,000 guests, an outside balcony, 7.5m high ceiling, dimensions not too "long and thin" (that other similar facilities suffer from), excellent views over the famous Old Trafford pitch, and situated above however many seats are required to achieve the stadium's minimum required capacity to host international cricket. Additionally, the brief called for an area away from the main floor for receptions and pre-dinner drinks, plus state-of-the-art kitchen facilities to cope with serving up to a 1,000 high quality meals simultaneously. It was also determined that the facility needed to be capable of being sub-divided, so that a number of smaller functions could be accommodated at the same time with the relevant acoustic partitions incorporated. Finally, the brief

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recognised the need for the facility to be stand-alone from cricket, so that on anything other than the biggest of cricket days, it could operate as a conference and banqueting operation while cricket was going on, without one affecting the other (something that had not been possible with the previous facilities with consequent negative effects on sales).

Rising to the Challenge

The team at BDP rose to this, let's face it tough challenge, with energy and enthusiasm, and this was needed in abundance when you think that the plans for the rest of the stadium needed to be submitted for planning approval at the same time. There was a real focus on The Point project though, and the interface between LCCC as the client, the architects in BDP, Cre8 as project managers, and Morgan Ashurst (now Morgan Sindall) as main contractors was hugely positive and cooperative — as it had to be for many reasons, not least as LCCC negotiated to host five nights of Take That concerts with a 50,000-capacity taking place at the same time as The Point construction.

All the hard work and detailed planning paid off however, when The Point officially opened on June 27, 2010. The reaction from customers who have seen the new facility has been incredibly positive, with LCCC reporting bookings worth over £1m prior to the launch. Put simply, there is no similar facility anywhere in the North-West of England and arguably further afield — and in the cricket world, a number of visiting Chief Executives from other Clubs have already cast envious eyes over Old Trafford's new building.

The majority of the remainder of the stadium re-development is not strictly commercially led, hence the importance of the cross-subsidy, plus other public funding, and of course the necessity for The Point to be the real cash-cow of the new set-up. For example, the planned new Players and Media building has to be designed with the needs of LCCC, international players, the written press and broadcasters first and foremost, which accounts for just a handful of days each year. While it is hoped to utilise this £6m building for educational purposes on non-match days, its usage cannot possibly stack up commercially in the same way as The Point does. However, the re-developed Pavilion will include executive suites and boxes, which will be linked via a bridge to The Point so that they may be used as additional break-out rooms as part of the non-match day functions.

The Architect's Story — Gavin Elliott, Project Director, BDP

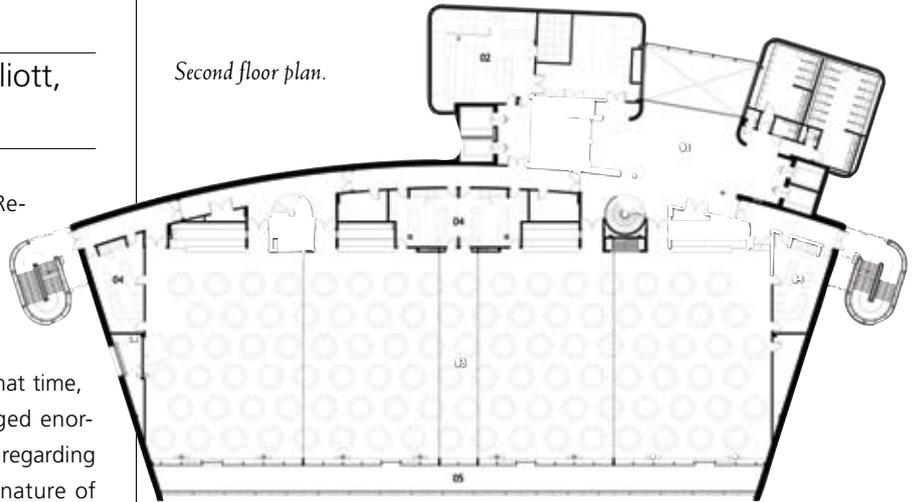
BDP first became involved with the LCCC Re-Development Project back in December 2004 as one of a number of design practices who pitched on the basis of a brief for design consultancy services, prepared by Drivas Jonas (LCCC's property advisors). Since that time, both the project brief and scope has changed enormously as the Club has clarified its thinking regarding how it needs to respond to the changing nature of cricket, and the commercial demands placed on it by these changes — such as the requirements of the ECB's TSF 2 document and the new imperative to bid for the staging rights for Test cricket.

As has been noted by Geoff Durbin, the reality was (and still is) that the revenue from cricket is not sufficient to drive the Club's business model. Therefore the commercial dynamic behind the re-development was as much about driving non-match day revenues — from hospitality, banqueting, concerts, etc — as it was about improving spectator facilities.

Accordingly much thought has gone into how the existing ground could be rationalised to make the operation on match days more efficient; with capacities varying from a few hundred for some County games, up to a maximum capacity of 25,000 for international games. Similarly, consideration has been given to how the non-match day commercial facilities can be brought together into a more compact arrangement, which aids operational efficiency, as well as making the visitor experience more straight forward and convenient. Furthermore, because the ground has in recent years found new life as a concert venue for large capacity events (up to 55,000), it was also important to consider the concert overlay — both in terms of spectator facilities and safety (including access and egress) — as well as the logistical requirements of the event operator.

In essence, BDP's new masterplan divides the ground into four quadrants. The north quadrant (including the existing pavilion) is the main focus for commercial operation, as well as containing facilities for the Club's members. The east quadrant is the focus for the Club's hotel operation, where (in the future) it will benefit from its own dedicated front door and on-site parking, as well as a new street level brasserie. The south side of the ground has a cricket focus, with a new Players and Media building with good links to the existing (extended) indoor cricket school and outdoor nets. (It is envisaged that for games with smaller capacity crowds, the spectators will be concentrated on the northern quad-

Second floor plan.

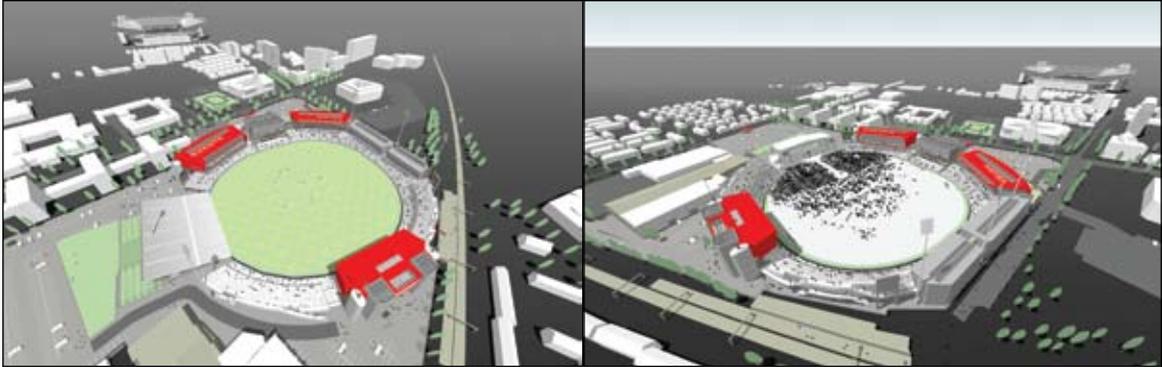


rant, thereby reducing stewarding/management costs). The western quadrant will be maintained as a 'gap' giving the Club the ability to significantly vary the stadium capacity by adding up to 10,000 temporary seats, or stage concerts — with the existing western car park 'converting' to the back-stage area.

Flexible Design & Green Credentials

The design of The Point has itself been a challenge. The desire to replicate the qualities of the 800-seat marquee with a direct view to the pitch, on one of the most constrained parts of the ground, has meant that the normal 'stadium-type' approach of burying the building under the seating terraces was simply not possible. Therefore, BDP have taken the opposite approach, whereby the 1,000 place hospitality box 'floats' above the new 2,500-seat general admission seating below, giving it an immediate relationship with the pitch, and benefiting from terrific views over the ground and Manchester beyond.

A lot of effort has gone into making the events area as flexible and operator-friendly as possible. The column free space is 58m long x 20m wide x 7.5m high, creating excellent sightlines for screens and stage presentations, and it is rectangular, making it highly flexible. The events area has also been designed so that it can split down into 4 x 250-seat spaces, with each quarter served by its own in-room bar and dedicated catering pod. (There are seven different room configurations available, with the spaces divided by sliding acoustic partitions.) The lighting controls system has been designed to be similarly flexible, with 1,000 remote control pin spots available to highlight individual tables, plus dimmable LED colour-change mood lighting to create atmosphere. Other features 'designed in' include hanging rails to allow the space to be dressed for events, and 52 x 1 tonne capacity hanging points for suspending equipment for events. The floor has been designed with a loading capacity of 5kN/m sq, ↻



BDP's new masterplan divides Old Trafford Cricket Ground into four quadrants: the north containing facilities for the Club's members; the east the focus for hotel operations; the south having a cricket focus with a new Players and Media building; and the western quadrant will be maintained as a 'gap' giving the Club the ability to significantly vary the stadium capacity by adding up to 10,000 temporary seats, or stage concerts — with the existing western car park 'converting' to the back-stage area.

making it suitable for heavy equipment, and a loading dock has been provided so large pieces of equipment can be manoeuvred directly into the space.

A mezzanine bar provides a 1,000-capacity pre-event drinks space, and also enables guests to be distributed laterally across the back of the events space, before using two large staircases to access their suites. The large glazed elevation pitch side is provided with blackout blinds for daytime use, as well as a full length (58m long x 2.5m deep) balcony for post event drinks, or simply viewing the cricket on match days.

Special attention was also given to making the building as sustainable as possible, with a host of Green features designed-in to the base scheme, including rainwater harvesting, solar collectors/hot water panels, super insulation (15% above current standards) and low energy LED lighting; all with the aim of achieving a Gold rating for the Green Business Tourism Scheme. ★

Author's Credits: Geoff Durbin, Commercial Director, LCCC and Gavin Elliott, Project Director, BDP.

BDP's design for The Point sees the 1,000-place hospitality box 'float' above the new 2,500-seat general admission seating below, giving it an immediate relationship with the pitch, and benefiting from terrific views over the ground and Manchester beyond.

IMAGE: ©DAVID BARBOUR/BDP

The Point at LCCC — Key Information, Facts & Figures

PROJECT TEAM

- Client: Lancashire County Cricket Club (LCCC)
- Architects & Interior Designers: BDP, Manchester Studio
- C&S Engineers: Capita Symonds
- M&E Engineers: Hulley & Kirkwood
- Cost Consultants: Gleeds
- Project Managers: CREB
- Main Contractor: Morgan Ashurst (now Morgan Sindall)
- Contract: Two-stage design and build
- Contract Duration: 58 weeks
- Contract Value: £10.8m

CAPACITY

Events/Hospitality space for up to 1,000 diners/guests

Bar/Reception space for 1,000 people

Spectator seating for 2,500 people (1,000 Hospitality & 1,500 General Admission)

SIZE

Gross Internal Floor Area = 4,530sqm (approx)

Gross External Floor Area = 4,760sqm (approx)

Total GEA Area Including Covered/Semi-External Space = 8,180sqm (approx)*

*(including external covered seating terrace, balcony, concourse, external plant compound, etc)

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