

**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**Report to:** Scrutiny  
**Date:** July 2024  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Executive Members for Highways, Environmental & Traded Services; Communities and Safety & Climate Change

**Report Title**

**Response to Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group – Events at Old Trafford**

**Summary**

This report has been prepared following consideration of, and in response to, the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group findings as detailed in the report dated 29 January 2024 in respect of events at the Old Trafford Stadium. Investigation by the Scrutiny Committee revealed a number of concerns, principally relating to parking, access and transportation.

**Recommendation(s)**

Scrutiny is asked to note the response.

**Contact person for access to background papers and further information:**

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: None

Relationship to Policy Framework /Corporate Priorities	The desire to improve sustainable travel to football matches aligns with the Corporate objective to address our climate crisis.
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Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The TFGM 2040 Transport Strategy supports modal shift away from reliance on private cars.
Financial Implications	The direct financial implications on the Council arising from this report are relatively minor and can be accommodated within existing staff time / established budgets. A number of specific initiatives below will be funded from external support, e.g. TfGM. More broadly the presence of Manchester United within the Borough creates certain specific regulatory obligations for the Council – for example in terms of Stadium safety, licensing and parking. For the most part these operate on a cost-recovery basis. Conversely, the regular influx of 70,000 visitors into the area and wider City region has a significant economic benefit – especially in terms of the hospitality industry. In addition, the linkage between Manchester United, a major global brand, and Old Trafford creates profile and prominence for the area which could not be bought by conventional means.
Legal Implications	<p>The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 introduced a system of safety certification of sports grounds by local authorities.</p> <p>A safety certificate sets the permitted capacity for a sports ground together with the detailed terms and conditions with which the ground management must comply in order to operate the sports ground at its permitted capacity.</p> <p>Under the 1975 Act, a local authority is required to issue a safety certificate to a designated sports ground or to a regulated stand at a non-designated ground.</p> <p>The regulation &amp; management of Highways is governed by the Highways Act 1980 and Traffic Management act 2004.</p>
Equality/Diversity Implications	Dangerous or anti-social parking has a particular impact on those with restricted mobility or other accessibility problems.
Sustainability Implications	The Report considers how sustainable travel could be better promoted around Old Trafford Stadium.
Carbon Reduction Implications	Better use of public transport and less reliance on the private car will also assist in meeting Carbon reduction ambitions.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	No significant implications arising directly from this report. More broadly issues connected with Manchester United have day to day implications for staff within the Council's Highways and Regulatory services.
Risk Management Implications	None directly arising.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The issues highlighted by the scrutiny committee link to the health and well being of the local community – these are addressed within the report.
Health and Safety Implications	Dangerous Parking connected with football matches has implications for the safety of other road users.

## 1.0 Background

1.1 In 2022 the Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task and Finish Group to look at the impact of Events at Old Trafford Football Ground upon the local Community and to look at ways that impact could be reduced. As part of this work a survey was sent to local residents – and 438 responses were received. The main issues recorded included:

- Reducing the reliance on car travel
- Improving parking arrangements and information
- Better integration of travel information for residents and visitors
- Better liaison between the club and community.
- Improving facilities for cycling

1.2 These issues were set out in a report by the Task and Finish group which was presented at the Executive meeting on 29 January 2024. This Report provides a detailed response to the matters raised.

## 2.0 Analysis and Commentary

2.1 Manchester United have played at the Old Trafford Stadium since 1910, aside from a ten year break during the second World war. Capacity at the ground has varied over time – peaking at around 76,000 in the 1930's before dropping back significantly in the 1940's before reaching over 60,000 by the 1970's. The introduction of further safety regulation and ultimately the requirement for all seater stadia led to a reduction in capacity once again by the 1990's. A series of major redevelopments over the past thirty years has seen the capacity of the stadium rise to 74,879. Despite major stadium redevelopments elsewhere in the country, Old Trafford remains by some margin, the largest ground in the Premier League.

2.2 It is evident therefore that large crowds have been visiting Old Trafford for well over a hundred years; the name is synonymous with football and is well known at home and abroad because of the connection with Manchester United. Football is part of the character and heritage of the area – and the regular influx of tens of thousands of fans can come as no surprise to residents or businesses.

2.3 However the benefits and challenges associated with large numbers of visitors inevitably varies over time as the nature of society and football also changes with the passing of each decade. There are some particular factors that have prompted a change in visitor patterns in recent years. These are set out below:

The Closure of Railway Station. Rail services have not used the Manchester United Halt since 2018 following health and safety concerns. As a consequence the Stadium is now poorly served by Rail – the nearest stations being at Trafford Park (1.3 miles) or Deansgate (2.1miles). Heavy Rail has a much larger passenger capacity than Metrolink – and so the closure of the Halt has inevitably placed greater pressure on to other travel modes – and to areas further away from the ground.

The Covid Pandemic. The onset of the pandemic saw severe restrictions on mass gatherings between March 2020 and July 2021 – impacting both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 football seasons. When spectators returned, new patterns of behaviour were adopted, reflecting concerns over infection – resulting in an increased use of car travel. This in turn prompted a spate of inappropriate and anti-social parking in several locations near the stadium. Despite the substantive end of Covid risks, this pattern of travel has been slow to revert back to its pre-pandemic picture.

Train Service Limitations. The United fan base appears to be as broad as ever with many supporters travelling over distance to attend games. Last trains to common destinations such as London, Edinburgh or Glasgow leave Manchester in the early evening – making train travel unattractive for late afternoon and evening fixtures. In addition, a succession of

train strikes have been ongoing across the network since June 2022 – leading to unreliable or cancelled services. This factor has further impeded modal shift to rail travel.

Expansion of Metrolink The expansion of Metrolink with the opening of the route to the Trafford Centre in March 2020 has created new opportunities for travel to the ground. The Station at Wharfside is now the closest to the stadium – situated less than 500m walk away. Although the full operation of the line was slow to become established, given its opening at the onset of the pandemic, the addition of a second line in the locality helps to spread visitor impacts. In due course the implementation of the wider Bee Network with bus franchising and integrated ticketing across different transport modes, should also broaden travel opportunities.

- 2.4 These different factors have evidently had an impact on the local community in recent years – however the changing transport environment also now presents an opportunity to address some of these in a more coordinated fashion. This is discussed further in the next section.

### 3.0 Response to Recommendations

- 3.1 Following their investigations, the Task and Finish group identified 12 principal recommendations. A response to each of these is set out below.

- 3.2 Recommendation 1: Red Routes - *Support plans to classify certain roads around Manchester United as red routes.*

The Council have been in discussions with TfGM since 2019 with intentions to propose Red Route schemes in Trafford

- Red routes are designed to enhance the experience of all road users by improving journey times and bus reliability while reducing congestion and improving air quality through managing start/stopping vehicle movements.

Trafford set out proposals for a Red Route on the A56 from junction 7 of the M60 to the boundary with Manchester City Council (including White City Circle), also, a Red Route Clearway on the A5081 from junction 9 of the M60 to White City Circle. These plans for parts of the busy A56 and A5081 roads in Stretford and Trafford Park would also provide a safer environment for people, walking, cycling, wheeling and driving, by discouraging obstructive and dangerous parking

These were shared for comment and approval to go out to Statutory Traffic Regulation Order consultation within Trafford with:

- Trafford Highways Team and TfGM
- Trafford Director and Corporate Director
- Trafford Executive responsible for Highways
- Trafford Leader
- Local Cllrs

The Red Route Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation launched on Monday 18 March 2024. Any comments/objections to the proposals, together with the grounds on which they are made, were to be sent, in writing by Monday 8 April 2024. Communication announcing this consultation was made via a press release and social media. Currently the Traffic Management team is reviewing all feedback from the consultation and will be producing an updated report with a recommended way forward for the Executive to consider.

The costs of establishing the red route are met by funding from TFGM; any fines accrued via enforcement will be used to offset the related operating costs or invested back into local transportation measures.

- 3.3 Recommendation 2: Modal Shift - *Work with Manchester United over time to reduce the number of spectators arriving by car, noting that there are currently around 16,000 cars not able to park at Old Trafford*

Trafford are committed to modal shift and will be collaborating with Manchester United together with TfGM to promote behavioural change and reduce car dependency. The loss of the rail halt remains a factor in patterns of travel and it is very unlikely that this facility will re-open in the foreseeable future. Consequently effort is focussed around better use of Metrolink and buses.

In the longer term opportunities to promote better accessibility by public transport will be fully explored as part of the potential redevelopment of the stadium.

- 3.4 Recommendation 3: Shuttle Buses - *Work with TFGM to extend the Shuttle service and the possibility of providing car parks further away from the ground, for example within Trafford Park*

The shuttle bus service has continued during the current season and extension of the service is being explored for the forthcoming season. The operation and management of the buses requires care and coordination to ensure it does not pose problems at the busiest periods of ingress or egress.

The Shuttle buses are currently funded by TFGM rather than Manchester United. A similar system of shuttle buses successfully operates from the Etihad Stadium, but it should be noted that this is funded by Manchester City

- 3.5 Recommendation 4: Parking - *Request Manchester United to provide a list of all genuine car parking facilities to fans they have.*

Manchester United will be looking to provide details of genuine parking provision as part of its newsletter, on its website and other communications as appropriate.

- 3.6 Recommendation 5: Parking - *Work with Manchester United and TFGM to see whether car parking facilities for games are highlighted on Google Maps, Waze, or other mapping apps*

As above the provision of parking and communicating the locations via appropriate communication platforms and APPS will be actively worked on by TfGM and Manchester United. Several car parks are already highlighted on such maps.

- 3.7 Recommendation 6: Traffic Data. *Look to link to TFGM's live Traffic Data and Manchester United information from the Council website and social media accounts.*

TFGM provide bespoke information on match days to inform the Clubs management of the ground – as traffic or travel disruption has a direct linkage to rates of ingress or egress at the stadium. The form of this data is currently within a platform that does not facilitate its wider distribution. There are thus some technical issues that need to be explored and if necessary, overcome. Ongoing assessment and sharing of traffic data will be continuing to enable appropriate action to be taken when needed by the travelling public. Alongside steps can be taken to ensure visitors are aware of other existing traffic and transport alert systems that are free to use.

- 3.8 Recommendation 7: Awareness - *Spread awareness of the monthly newsletter to ensure people are made aware of when matches are being held.*

Awareness of the monthly newsletter and uses of other communication tools will be utilised to ensure that the match fixtures are effectively communicated to all those who may be affected. The Council's communications team has a new dedicated officer handling place-based issues – and is working to expand its social media influence. This provides an opportunity to reach those who are either new to the area or who had no previous engagement on Club related matters.

- 3.9 Recommendation 8: Cycling - *Look at the option to run a secure bike storage trial with Manchester United to see if it increases cycling to matches, and if positive, encourage Manchester United to commit to further provision of safe, secure cycle parking facilities on site.*

The active travel improvements installed in and around Old Trafford over the past 18 months mean that cycling to the locality is easier and safer than in the past. Manchester Utd currently provide bicycle parking on conventional stands at the N2, E2 and W2 car parks. This provision is better than certain clubs in the premier league – but others go further still. For example, Liverpool FC operate a cycle hub where bicycles can be stored under the supervision of Club stewards. Secure bike storage trials will be explored with Manchester United and TfGM as this will capitalise on recent active Travel investment and will benefit modal shift.

- 3.10 Recommendation 9: Parking - *Work with TFGM and the Trafford Centre with a view to utilising the parking spaces at the Trafford Centre for Match Day Parking.*

The Trafford Centre has previously discouraged match day parking at its (free) car parks – especially as it appeared many visitors were not using the shops and services of the centre. The optimum position is where fans utilise the many food and beverage offers before or after a match – or alternatively some group members stay and shop while other watch the football.

There is a clear opportunity for mutually beneficial leisure activities to take place – and ones that make the best use of both available car parks and the proximity of the Trafford Park Metrolink line. The Council has regular meetings with the Trafford Centre and further discussion on a suitable approach to match day parking is planned.

There is also an existing official Metrolink Park and Ride facility off Westinghouse Road adjacent to Parkway Metrolink Stop, which is convenient for use on Match days.

- 3.11 Recommendation 10: Traffic Data - *Ensure that the monitoring data from Manchester United Traffic Management Plan be shared with Ward Councillors.*

Sharing of monitoring data from the Traffic Management Plan can be shared with Ward Councillors when made available

- 3.12 Recommendation 11: Community Liaison - *Support the continuation of the regular meetings between Manchester United and ward Councillors and that performance data from the Traffic Management Plan be shared at those meetings.*

Manchester United currently hold meetings with Ward Councillors – and also other ad hoc meetings with community groups. This provides an opportunity for the sharing of information and There is an ongoing commitment to continue the meetings that already take place between Manchester United, TfGM and Trafford Council so that all parties are

brought into discussions around transportation. Such liaison also ensures traffic management is monitored and changes made to traffic arrangements as necessary.

3.13 **Recommendation 12: Resident Issues** - Support the reforming of the task and finish group to look at significant issues by residents if they occur.

Should any significant issues occur going forward relative to the parking and traffic management associated with match days there is a commitment to reform a suitable task and finish group to look at the impacts of such issues with the potential to look at solutions that all parties can contribute to.

**4.0 Next Steps**

- 4.1 The Council continues to work closely with Manchester United over the management of the ground and its environs. The Council has ongoing duties and obligations in terms of stadium safety, highways, parking and community safety – and therefore the matters highlighted by the Task & Finish Group will remain under sharp focus.
- 4.2 As has been widely reported, Manchester United are considering making significant changes to their Stadium and environs. Should such plans come to fruition, matters such as access and transport will be central to those proposals.

**5 Reasons for Recommendation**

In order to address the matters highlighted by the Scrutiny Task & Finish Group.

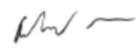
**Key Decision** No

**If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?** n/a

**Finance Officer Clearance** (type in initials).....PC.....

**Legal Officer Clearance** (type in initials).....EM.....

**[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE** (electronic).....



To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.

**Appendices: None**