

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 27 January 2025
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration

Report Title

Old Trafford Regeneration Update

Summary

This report provides an update on the Old Trafford Regeneration work, including the plans and next steps for Wharfside and potential future governance for regeneration in the locality.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the progress on the Old Trafford Regeneration work be noted, including the conclusion of the Options Report attached at Appendix 1 and the findings of the Economic Impact report attached at Appendix 2.
2. That the feasibility and potential benefits of the establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation for the Old Trafford Regeneration area be explored.
3. That the benefits of a Mayoral Development Zone for the western Gateway, in partnership with Salford City Council, be explored.
4. That an updated Strategic Masterplan be prepared for the wider Wharfside / Old Trafford Regeneration area subject to securing necessary funding.
5. That the area shown on the Plan at Appendix 3 be adopted as the boundary of this Masterplan and for the potential Mayoral Development Corporation.
6. That appropriate mechanisms for the coordination and funding of infrastructure within the Old Trafford Regeneration area be explored.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Deloitte – Old Trafford Regeneration- Feasibility & Options Report – Executive Summary
Appendix 2 - Oxford Economics – the Economic Impact of a Proposed Stadium and Wharfside Regeneration
Appendix 3 – Map – the Boundary of Old Trafford Regeneration

Relationship to Policy Framework /Corporate Priorities

The regeneration activities support all five Corporate Priorities, but most especially a thriving economy and homes for all and Culture, sport and heritage for everyone.

Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The Old Trafford Regeneration (OTR) area is situated within the 'Western Gateway' Growth Location as set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy. Policies of the recently adopted Places for Everyone Strategic Local plan will apply to planning decisions in the area.
Financial Implications	The completion of the proposed Master Plan / SRF and the appointment of a project director will require additional resources as set out in the report. A bid for £150,000 to the GMCA revenue programme has been made to resource this work. This will require match funding of up to £37,500; this resource has been provisionally identified for 2025/26 from the existing Economic Regeneration Reserve. Any financial implications arising from new governance arrangements will be considered as part of the exploration of options.
Legal Implications	The differing legal status of the potential plans and master plans that might be prepared for the OTR area and the benefits of each are set out in section 3 of the report. The Localism Act 2011 sets out the parameters for creation of locally-led Mayoral Development Corporations (MDCs), where elected mayors designate MDCs in consultation with their combined authorities.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Improving accessibility for all people is one of the emerging themes of the OTR work to date. It is also recognised that there is a need to engage and communicate with a broad range of individuals, organisations and other stakeholders as the project develops.
Sustainability Implications	Making more effective use of the Old Trafford Wharfside areas will support the principles of sustainable development. It is already recognised that it will be important to ensure community development takes place alongside physical transformation.
Carbon Reduction Implications	One of the challenges of OTR is how to move residents, business people and match day visitors in a sustainable way. The ambition is that any increase in visitors to the area will be accomplished via sustainable travel modes.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	The OTR project will present ongoing resource implications for the Council, especially around staffing and the time necessary to support the project. Issues specifically arising within this report are covered within section 3.
Risk Management Implications	None directly arising.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None directly arising.
Health and Safety Implications	None directly arising. Ultimately the Council will have a role in regulating any revitalised stadium as part of its responsibilities under the Sports Ground Safety Act.
Socio Economic Duty Implications	The OTR has significant potential benefits for both the local and national economy. These are set out within the body of the report.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Trafford Core Strategy (Local Plan) adopted in 2012 first identified Trafford Wharfside as a strategic location, recognising its potential for new economic and residential development; aligned to the adjacent Media City complex and nearby Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) Stadium. Since then, whilst some key developments have been progressed the area has not seen the scale of renewal originally anticipated.
- 1.2** In the meantime, the Greater Manchester Strategy 2021-2031 establishes a series of six Growth Locations across the conurbation. The Western Gateway encompasses areas of Salford and Trafford stretching westwards broadly along the Ship Canal corridor. As the name suggests, Growth Locations will be the parts of the city region where most new development and economic activity will be focussed in future. Trafford Wharfside is situated at the eastern end of the Western Gateway, alongside Media City across the water in Salford. Collectively these two significant neighbourhoods provide anchor points for further growth and development along the Ship Canal corridor.
- 1.3** In February 2024, the Executive approved a draft Trafford Wharfside Development Framework and Masterplan for consultation purposes. The Framework and Masterplan renewed the Council's ambitions to regenerate this strategic location on the southern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal
- 1.4** Over the past 12 months the revised ownership structure at Manchester United Football Club has brought fresh impetus and thinking to plans for the area, with a clear desire from the Club to see a revitalised stadium and to improve the surrounding Old Trafford Neighbourhood. As a result, significant activity has taken place over the past 9 months to develop a coherent programme to capitalise on the opportunities now presented. This report updates on the key elements of that work and also sets out the next steps in the project.

2.0 UPDATE ON KEY PROJECTS

Update on The Trafford Wharfside Development Framework and Masterplan

- 2.1** The Trafford Wharfside area is of strategic importance due to its location and major development and regeneration potential. In light of this, the Trafford Wharfside Development Framework was produced in partnership with key stakeholders Peel L&P, Manchester United Football Club and Salford City Council. Covering an area of around 87 hectares, the Framework sets the overall vision for the area and how it should operate as a 'place', to guide future development in a co-ordinated and sustainable way. The vision for the Wharfside area is for it to become a dynamic and ultra-connected network of communities where all amenities, landmarks and public spaces are easily accessed within a 5 minute walk. The vision is to create a greener, more natural place which offers a balance between engaged community spaces and major global destination spaces. The result will be an attractive, connected and natural place to live, visit and dwell.
- 2.2** Potential development sites, landscape/public realm, active travel, transport and connectivity improvements have been identified set in the context of an overarching plan that complements policy and provides guidance to landowners/potential developers. The Framework also identifies five-character areas that reflect different scale, character and uses, and identifies potential uses in each. These character areas include:
- (i) Trafford Wharf – north area of Wharfside bordering the Manchester Ship Canal.
 - (ii) Heritage Quarter – adjacent to Trafford Wharf.
 - (iii) Stadium District – Manchester United Football Club area.

(iv) Innovation Quarter – western area of Wharfside.

(v) Wharfside Heart – connects the four other character areas together.

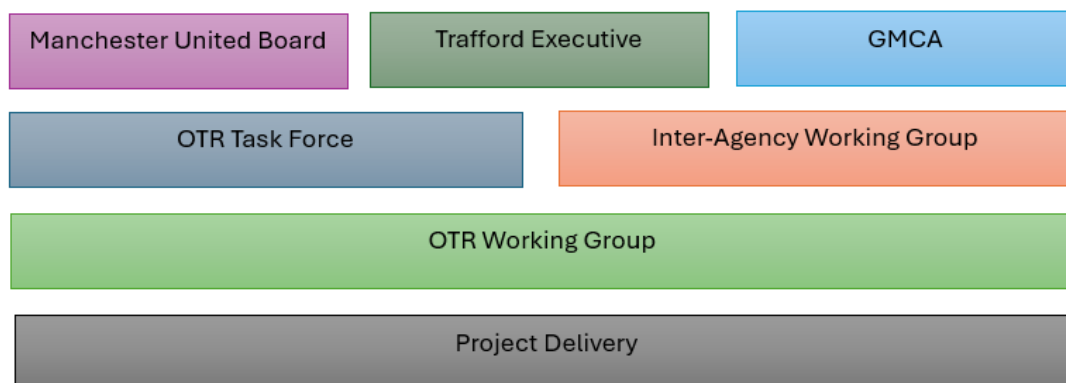
- 2.3** Alongside the Development Framework, and partly at the instigation of DLUHC (as was) via the Design Code Pathfinder Programme, in 2023 a Wharfside Masterplan was prepared which was to form part of the Trafford Design Code Supplementary Planning Document. The Masterplan does not cover the whole of the Development Framework area, or the proposed OTR boundary, but a smaller area between the Manchester Ship Canal to the north and Wharfside Way to the south, Warren Bruce Road and the Imperial War Museum North to the west, and Trafford Road to the east. The Masterplan is intended to sit underneath the high level Development Framework and to provide more detailed guidance and direction for the development of the Wharfside area.
- 2.4** The Masterplan is intended to demonstrate through a set of urban design principles how a new sustainable community can be delivered at Trafford Wharfside. A suite of plans sets out development blocks, open space, public realm, building heights and building types, among other things. These overarching plans are then underpinned by ‘plot development plans’ which demonstrate one way in which each of the individual development plots could come forward.
- 2.5** The Masterplan shows that approximately 5000 new homes (including 250 townhouses), 160,000sqm of commercial space, a mobility hub and a new school could be provided at Wharfside by building at greater density. The current lack of green spaces in and around Wharfside and the needs of the new community for open space would primarily be addressed by a substantive 1 Hectare new linear park, which would also work as a viewing corridor between the existing Manchester United Football Club Stadium and the Imperial War Museum North. A large number of tall buildings are shown, of up to 30 storeys, but with height controlled to form a planned and coherent skyline. Given the number of tall buildings, it is also critical that the public realm is of high quality to form an attractive and sustainable place, and the masterplan indicates how this public realm could be delivered equitably by each of the land parcels.
- 2.6** In February 2024, the Executive approved the draft Trafford Wharfside Development Framework and the draft Trafford Wharfside Masterplan. An online consultation on these documents took place between 7 March 2024 and 18 April 2024. Thirty-two consultation responses were received to the Masterplan. A range of comments were submitted, with some welcoming the proposals and some concerned about the impact on their businesses. There was also a mix of responses to the aspiration of the Masterplan in terms of building density and height, with some considering the amount of development was too much and others considering it was not ambitious enough.
- 2.7** However, work was paused on both the Framework and the Masterplan when it became clear that with the emergence of the OTR arrangements and the Manchester United Taskforce, the scope and contents of the documents may need to change to reflect the broader aspirations of the OTR project. Following the recent activity by the Task Force and tri-partite working group it is now timely to resume work on the Wharfside Masterplan; this is discussed in section 3 of the report.

Update on the Old Trafford Regeneration Project

- 2.8** During 2024, MUFC commissioned significant work to explore options for the renewal of the Football Stadium and related land holdings. This necessitated discussion with the Council and other key partners such as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), as a coordinated public/private approach is needed to maximise the regeneration potential of the area.

2.9 These discussions culminated in a decision in September 2024 to enter into a formal collaboration agreement with MUFC and the GMCA to develop further the neighbourhood’s renewal. This ambition is now consolidated into the OTR Project, which has now its own plan and branding. The following structure is currently in operation:

Old Trafford Regeneration – Organisational Structure



2.10 In terms of project delivery, work through the autumn has been concentrated on five principal work streams:

- Project A: The Stadium – options for a new or revitalised football stadium.
- Project B: The Stadium District – creating the right setting for the football stadium.
- Project C: Freight – recognising the close proximity of rail freight to the Stadium and any future implications.
- Project D: Wharfside – how stadium plans will interact with the existing masterplan vision.
- Project E: Transport – recognising the key role that transport and accessibility will have in the stadium plans and wider area’s regeneration.

2.11 These workstreams have enabled the production of a Feasibility and Options Report prepared by consultants Deloitte. The Executive Summary of this is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. This document explains the key conclusions of the work carried out over the autumn – in terms of commercial implications, stakeholder engagement, risks and next steps. These conclusions will guide and inform further stages of work, including a revised Wharfside Master Plan, the proposals for which are set out in more detail in section 3 of the report.

Update on the Economic Impact of a Proposed Stadium and Wharfside Regeneration

2.12 One of the early actions of the OTR collaboration was for the three partners to commission Oxford Economics to assess the potential economic implications of a revitalised Stadium and connected regeneration of the wider Wharfside area. This work is intended to gauge the broader benefit of urban renewal in this area – and the impact that this would make locally, to the City Region and nationally. It is very much a first view on the subject – and its conclusions will need to be honed and adjusted as regeneration plans start to be refined.

2.13 The economic assessment is based on a rejuvenated 100,000 capacity stadium, situated at the heart of a fully regenerated Stadium District and Wharfside neighbourhood. The Study

concludes that the proposed regeneration would provide a net increase of £4.18 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) contributions to the Trafford economy and facilitate 47,900 additional jobs by 2039, compared to the existing stadium and without any urban renewal. Across the national economy, the net economic impact amounts to a £7.32 billion GVA contribution to the UK economy and 91,600 jobs across the UK workforce, alongside £1.38 billion in tax revenues.

- 2.14** The Assessment highlights the opportunity to transform large surface car parks (which remain unused for most of the time) into economically active areas – which can sustain jobs and employment throughout the calendar year. It also notes that development within the current Wharfside area is generally at low density and that jobs growth has been generally within lower paid sectors (although there are some notable exceptions to this). The economic growth in the adjacent Media City demonstrates how an area's fortunes can be transformed - and Wharfside has all the ingredients to become a significant growth point at the heart of the City region.
- 2.15** A key part of the development of central Manchester over the past 30 years has been the dramatic rise in residential development, with a significant increase in apartments being built in all parts of the centre. In more recent years this trend has spread to more peripheral locations – and locations on the East and West of the City have seen a marked increase in home building. The developments at Pomona, Ordsall and Media City being examples of the westwards move of housing along the Ship Canal corridor. It is estimated that the Wharfside Masterplan will deliver 5,545 additional homes and the Stadium District many thousands in addition. The increased residential development, as well as providing much needed housing, will also add to the economic benefits of the project.
- 2.16** The study also considered the value arising from visitors to the locality. MUFC estimate they receive around 2.3 million visits annually – and these visitors spent an estimated £358 million in the city region. Of those travelling to the stadium area, it is estimated that 28.9% or over 682,000 were international tourists. Such visitors are generally higher spending on average – and there is a real opportunity to enhance the visitor experience for those travelling from further afield and to encourage longer dwell times and linked visits to other attractions.
- 2.17** Finally Oxford Economics have also looked at the way in which Stadium redevelopments can be the catalyst for transport, infrastructure, environmental and community based improvements. Depending on the area and measures employed, the Stadium & Wharfside sits within the most deprived 10-30% of localities in England – and so the opportunity for social and economic improvement is clear. As regards transport, parallels are drawn with other major sporting developments and the way that transport has been enhanced in their wake. All of these add to the wider benefit that OTR will bring to the Borough and wider conurbation. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1.

3.0 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1** Following the work outlined in the report above and the significant activity during the second half of 2024, there is now a need to consider what further action is required to progress the ambition for Old Trafford. MUFC will continue to develop and evaluate their options for a revitalised stadium – but in the meantime the Council and its partners can take other steps to ensure the recent momentum continues. In particular there is a need to complete the master planning work for the locality, and also to consider what form of governance will best take the area forward.

Governance

- 3.2** The current OTR structure is set out in Section 2 of the report, however it is recognised that as the pace and complexity of regeneration develops, so new arrangements will be needed to oversee and coordinate activity and ensure delivery of shared objectives. One potential

option would be the creation of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) for the Old Trafford Area.

An MDC is a statutory body which can drive the delivery of large-scale development, including mixed-use regeneration, transformational urban extensions, and new settlements. The core objective of an MDC is to secure the regeneration of a designated area which can be achieved through the use of a range of powers including:

- Land assembly (including through CPO) and disposal;
- Site preparation and facilitation of infrastructure delivery to support place creation;
- Establishing joint ventures and agreements with delivery and investor partners;
- Masterplanning and establishing development frameworks for the area, and
- Discretionary rate relief.

- 3.3 The Greater Manchester Mayor used these powers in 2019 to establish an MDC for Stockport Town Centre West, in collaboration with Stockport Council and Homes England (but did not adopt all the available powers as part of the MDC). Other MDCs are also being established elsewhere in Greater Manchester.
- 3.4 It is therefore proposed that this model be explored to guide and govern Old Trafford regeneration. This process will need to consider the practicalities and benefits of this approach and also the powers to be employed. However at the outset it is agreed that the MDC should not include planning powers; these would remain with the Council as the Local Planning Authority. In terms of the extent of any MDC it is suggested that the starting point would be the OTR area set out at Appendix 3.
- 3.5 Any proposal for an MDC or similar mechanism will need to be aligned with other existing (and proposed) structures for growth and redevelopment. As referenced previously, the Greater Manchester Strategy identifies six Growth Locations around the city region as focal points for development. The OTR area falls within the Western Gateway – a location broadly stretching westwards along the ship canal corridor and encompassing key development sites within Trafford and Salford. As well as some long term proposals, the Western Gateway affords some of the best opportunities in Greater Manchester for more immediate growth taking advantage of projects that possess a strong pedigree and are already well advanced. Key developments such as New Carrington, Trafford Waters and the Civic Quarter are already building – and will ultimately provide some 12,000 new homes in those 3 locations alone.
- 3.6 Consideration has therefore been given to how the Western Gateway can be better promoted within Greater Manchester (and further afield) in order to better coordinate infrastructure and coordinate investment. One mechanism for doing this could be the creation of a Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ). Unlike the MDC, this is a non-statutory entity in which the GMCA employs its own statutory powers, especially in relation to strategic economic development and regeneration. Within an MDZ, the GMCA and its partners utilise their own resources and links and relationships with government, infrastructure providers and the private sector, as part of an integrated place based programme. This is intended to provide confidence to both the market and the public sector.
- 3.7 Accordingly, it is proposed that Trafford, Salford and the GMCA should explore further the potential for an MDZ for the Western Gateway. This would sit alongside and complement the potential MDC for Wharfside – so it is suggested that both should be explored in parallel

Wharfside Strategic Masterplan

- 3.8 As set out in Section 2 of the report considerable work was undertaken during 2023 and early last year on the Trafford Wharfside Development Framework and the Trafford Wharfside Masterplan, with consultation taking place in the spring of 2024 on both documents. Following the additional activity linked to the revitalisation of the stadium and its environs, there is now a need to update and expand on both documents, building on the work undertaken to date.
- 3.9 It is proposed that this takes the form of a Strategic Masterplan similar to a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), which will look comprehensively across the Old Trafford Regeneration area. Such a document will provide the guidance necessary to coordinate new development with necessary infrastructure and community facilities. It should also ensure that stadium plans can be fully accounted for – and that development in the vicinity will complement rather than conflict with those proposals. The SRF will utilise the existing work in the area and will expand it further to take account of the more recent thinking around the stadium and related development.
- 3.10 SRFs have been used to good effect elsewhere in Greater Manchester – but it should be emphasised that they have limited status and weight in terms of the planning system and other statutory functions. For this reason, the SRF needs to be structured and timed so it can inform and underpin a related policy with the Trafford Local Plan. Following the adoption of our Strategic Local Plan (Places for Everyone) in 2024, work will continue apace during 2025 to progress the detailed Local Plan for Trafford Borough. This affords the opportunity to ensure the proposals for OTR are fully embedded within this statutory plan, which once adopted, will be the starting point in planning decision making. However, given proposed changes to the National planning system and the desirability of putting an up to date plan for the Borough in place, the Local Plan will be prepared in accordance with a strict timetable.

Time is therefore a critical factor as and such it proposed to undertake a two-stage approach to ensure sufficient detail is in place to guide development and secure funding as set out below:

- Set out the overarching principles and limits of the OTR/Wharfside area in the Local Plan, allowing for a strategic approach and assessment of development to be made, particularly with regard to transport and infrastructure. Land could be allocated and/or designated/ safeguarded through this and be run in parallel with the other relevant OTR projects as they progress, to ensure consistency and deliverable compliance. Key strategic elements of the draft Wharfside Masterplan and Development Framework would be subsumed into the Local Plan.
 - Commission the preparation of a Strategic Masterplan for the whole OTR/Wharfside area, assist the emerging MDC process and provide quicker and more detailed development advice and guidance within the scope of the emerging Local Plan policy; whilst also responding to existing development pressures.
- 3.11 It is therefore proposed to commission this Masterplan document as soon as is feasible, subject to receiving necessary funding. In order to address all of the complex development and infrastructure interactions arising from the significant growth and an expanded stadium, this will need to be a significant document, backed up by relevant additional evidence. It is therefore estimated that this commission will cost in the order of £150,000.
- 3.12 Accordingly a funding bid has been made into the current GMCA revenue funding programme to meet the cost of this commission. This submission was made on 6 December 2024 and a decision is anticipated around the time of this Executive meeting. This bid is expected to require match funding of up to £37,500 from the Council and this resource has been provisionally identified for 2025/26 from the existing Economic Regeneration Reserve.

To further support this work and other activity related to Old Trafford Regeneration a related bid has also been submitted to the Revenue programme for a Project Director who will work full time on the programme for a period of around 2 years.

- 3.13 Development interest in the Wharfside area has increased in recent months, with a number of sites currently being explored. Whilst this interest is welcome, there is a clear risk of development becoming uncoordinated or failing to adequately contribute to the wider infrastructure needs of the area. The Masterplan should in large measure address the former point, but further consideration may need to be given to how proper provision can be made for public realm, transport measures and community facilities. Accordingly it is proposed that appropriate mechanisms for securing suitable infrastructure provision in the OTR area be further explored and (if appropriate) be the subject of a report to the Executive and / or the Planning & Development Management Committee
- 3.14 Collectively these measures should provide the right balance of rigour and agility to address short term developments whilst ensuring the integrity and sustainability of long term regeneration goals. The mix of planning approaches will enable the Council and its partners to move at pace – but it will still create the necessary planning policy basis for formal activity such as the Local Plan or land assembly via Compulsory Purchase, should that prove necessary.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation took place on the Wharfside Master Plan and Development Framework as set out in the report. Further consultation will take place during the next stages of the Masterplan – and also on the Trafford Local Plan. Manchester United conducted a through engagement programme with fans, stakeholders and the community through the autumn.

5 Other Options

- 5.1 The Council could choose not to take a proactive approach to Old Trafford Regeneration – but such a stance would overlook one of the most significant opportunities for urban renewal in the Borough and would not best serve the interests of residents and businesses as the report sets out.

6 Reason for the Recommendations

In order to progress the Regeneration of Old Trafford.

Key Decision No

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

Finance Officer Clearance PC.....

Legal Officer Clearance EM.....

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE



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.