

**Regeneration Committee site visit to Manchester City FC
15 September 2014**

Attendees

Assembly Members Gareth Bacon AM (Chairman), Navin Shah AM (Deputy Chair), James Cleverly AM, Murad Qureshi AM

Assembly staff Katie Smith, Jo Sloman, Adam Wildman

Visiting

Manchester City FC

Pete Bradshaw, Head of Infrastructure and Corporate Social Responsibility

Andy Ranger, Project Manager, BAM (contractor)

Manchester City Council

Anne Taylor, Regeneration Manager East

Yawar Abbas, Principal Events Manager

Overview of visit

The Committee visited Manchester City FC to see the City Football Academy and expansion of the Etihad Stadium in east Manchester, both of which are currently under construction. Members also heard from Manchester City Council officers about the council's work with the football club on the regeneration of the area.

Discussion topics

Background and development of the City Football Academy

The City Football Academy site

- The City Football Academy is being constructed on an 80-acre site, which was purchased 4 years ago and is 100 per cent owned by MFCFC. The land was traditionally occupied by heavy industry and dominated by chemical works, and latterly by 8 businesses including scrapyards and window glazing companies. In the site remediation process, everything found on the site was washed and reused.
- MFCFC told the Committee that the club could have chosen to build on green belt land. When looking for sites for a new training ground, the club looked at Macclesfield but it wanted to remain in Manchester where the club's heritage lies. The club first began discussing a 'street to stadium' concept in 1974 and it is now being realised. MFCFC told the Committee that this is the first time training facilities have been built in sequence. One side of the site is for community football and leisure, while the other side is the academy, so that community participants can see what's happening at the club. In turn, the academy looks onto the first team.
- The academy campus will be connected to the Etihad Stadium via a new footbridge opening in October. A new tram stop also connects the site.

- The development scheme promotes sustainability: it reuses rainwater; the club has built a CHP energy centre; and it is looking at developing a hydrogen centre in a few years. 2,000 trees have been planted, contributing to biodiversity in the area.

The Academy facilities

- There are 7 new pitches; 6 designated for the first team and 1 for the youth team. The Academy includes a 7,000 capacity arena which will host women's football and youth games (the club has formally re-launched its women's team). The academy also includes 3 new indoor pitches. The site aims to be fully operational by the end of 2014.
- There are currently 48 scholars on the MFCFC Academy programme. Some students enter the training scheme via scouts across the North West. Candidates take part in trial days and coaches assess their skills over a week. Six open days are held per year. Training can take several years. The club is responsible for young people's education up until age 19.
- The indoor training centre will be handed over to 1st team training in October. New buildings are being erected for the first and youth teams, each with residential accommodation on the top. The team will use the residential accommodation the night before matches. An energy centre is located next door.
- To the east, there will be a new HQ to include the group's offices and a media centre. MFCFC has several sister clubs; New York City (acquired in January 2013), Melbourne City (in which it has a minor stake), and Yokohoma (in which it also has a minority stake).
- 5 acres of the site has been donated to the city council for community use. A new sixth form college has been very successful. A new high school – the first in the area – opened 5 years ago. The club also contributed to financing a new leisure centre. There is one community pitch and the arena is open to schools. The EIS (English Institute of Sport) will be for elite sports funded through the UK Sport Lottery.

Wider benefits of the scheme

- The club tries to ensure that suppliers are procured locally; a minimum 84 per cent of goods and services are procured from within the M60 corridor.
- 68 apprentices are employed on the site; 90 per cent of whom have long-term job prospects going forward. 70 per cent are to be employed locally.

The Etihad stadium and surrounding area

- The stadium is being expanded by 18 per cent, with new seating under construction at the South Stand.
- In the last year the club has opened 'City Square' (providing places to eat), and the concept has been highly successful.
- An athletics track near the stadium is used by school groups and regional clubs. In June and July it is in full use for sports days. A challenge with the athletics track is that there are more stadia than events. Originally, it had 250 seats, and it was converted to hold 6,000. The council has struggled in recent years to fill the seats. The venue has potential, but it has only hosted one annual major event (the Paralympic World Cup 2005 - 2012). The track was unsuccessful in its bid for the Diamond League in 2011.
- There are plans for further development around the stadium and academy. The land around the stadium is owned by a joint venture company, while 12 acres belongs to other landowners. The area immediately around the stadium is unlikely to be residential (like Wembley), but it is more likely to be commercial (like that planned at Stratford). To the

south of the site, there is agreement for a retail development. To the north of the site there are 25 acres designated for a leisure destination containing hotels and retail. To the west of the site, separate discussions are underway on a market rental housing-led regeneration scheme funded by the Abu Dhabi United Group. This will extend from the eastern edge of the city.

- MCFC has commercial objectives to attract hotels, retail, exhibition space etc. Over the past 10 years this has been a challenge, and at the moment there is only one store. The club told Members that the area needs to become a destination with family entertainment and places to eat. Ideas include a covered theme park or a covered beach.

Long-term regeneration and partnership working with Manchester City Council

- The new Metrolink tram stop provides much improved connections to the city, but building it was a long and complex process. Officers noted that expansion of the tram system has taken place against the odds. The tram was originally designed for the Games; the proposal was re-initiated in 2009, and it opened in 2013. It has been funded through a combination of funding from the council and DfT.
- MCFC is about to issue a 50-year travel plan. It is also considering installing cycle routes alongside the road. Most of the city is accessible by tram. 10 years ago the city had a good tram system, but it was only available in some areas. It is a radial system; Manchester now needs a route equivalent to the Circle Line. The council noted that it is working on improving cross-city connections.
- The council told the Committee that the regeneration of east Manchester has been part of a long-term strategy over the past 12 years. In recent years, the council has delivered 1,000 homes in the area (out of 6,000 across the city); a mix of homes for affordable rent and sale. Development of the area has to be a long term project and the site is continuously dynamic. The club and council had an agreement to look at the site's long-term viability. In the 2000s, a super casino bid failed. The partners now have to look at the long-term benefits of developing the area, and at making the wider site fully accessible. The single biggest local demand was for a high school, and a school for 900 pupils has now been delivered.
- The scheme has mostly been aspirational, but its development has been evolutionary. There was a broad masterplan (for example, for a housing zone), but it has not been rigid. In view of the economic climate, their strategy looked to protecting the existing investment. Trust in local politicians and public leaders was critical to the partnership; the club noted that the council's leadership was second to none, without which the club would not have invested.
- MCFC leases the stadium from the council. The club had strict planning obligations to provide community facilities/ access to the stadium. Local people did not want access to these, and MCFC had to respond to other demands. It provides 4,500 hours of community use at the Etihad Stadium annually. The community will also have some access to the Academy site.
- The council's lease agreement with the club changed 3 years ago. Rent was based on occupation of seats and car parking spaces. It changed to become a fixed rental agreement, plus a percentage share of naming rights. This allows the club to plan its business and it provides a guarantee for the council.
- The council has engaged schools within walking distance to encourage them to use the facilities at the site. MCFC has an outreach team, working on issues such as sport and health. The club's wellbeing scheme is available free of charge and reaches 500,000 people; one of the largest in the country. It also helps people engage in other sports.
- The club's 'front door' is important; it provides a welcoming opportunity, and the Academy site must be the same. MCFC recalled the 'sport for all' objective in the 1970s to tackle the

85 per cent of people not involved in sport. This is still the same now, with people thinking sport is not for them, and it is a big legacy consideration for the partners. The council has had to tackle local perceptions about elite sport. It held open days and opened venues such as the velodrome.

Impact on the local community

- MCFC employs 30 apprentices corporately. They are employed in both administration and construction roles, with the aim to provide apprentices jobs at the club afterwards.
- The club aimed to build a world-leading Academy within its community (having made the active decision to be based there rather than 8 miles out of the town where it is now). Most people in east Manchester know someone who is employed at the club.
- MCFC looked 4-6 years ahead at the skills it would need, for example, hotel managers, and finance professionals. Promoting its roles to the local job market, the club highlights the fact that the running of the first team relies on 400 jobs. MCFC has also required skills for lesser-known roles (water technologists, for example); it went into schools to spread the message. It found that job centres could often only offer a limited range of skills. The club worked with JCP and other partners to make these jobs attractive.
- The club designated a community wall as part of its planning permission, which was designed by 15-year olds from a local school. It was built by robots. Both students involved in the project are now studying engineering.

Consultation with the community

- For the academy development, MCFC agreed a consultation boundary with the council. Every house was invited to participate. The club hosted an exhibition attracting 24,000 visitors. 4,000 came from the local area and the club took on their views. Issues arose about traffic around the academy, and environmental issues, such as trees. There was high interest in the jobs. The club's webpage provides updates on the development and community forum meets monthly, with representatives of community organisations and businesses.
- MCFC observed that football does not generally cause problems for the local community, but concerts can lead to complaints. Visitors can get lost if they are not used to the local area (for example, parking in the wrong area). The stadium typically hosts 6 acts, mostly in June.