

Designs for Old Trafford Stadium District Revealed

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Words and Photography Foster and Partners.



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In September 2024, Foster + Partners was appointed by the world's most famous football club, Manchester United, to develop a masterplan for the Old Trafford Stadium District. The focus is to design a world-class football destination and home for Manchester United fans, coupled with a wider masterplan comprising mixed-use developments, which would benefit the local community, attract new residents, increase job provision, and make it a vibrant destination for visitors from Manchester, the UK and all around the world.

In addition to the masterplan, Foster + Partners has worked with Manchester United to produce some illustrative concepts for the new landmark stadium, which would sit at the heart of this ambitious masterplan, and act as a catalyst for regeneration. This will provide the basis for more detailed feasibility, consultation, design and planning work as the project enters a new phase.

Lord Norman Foster, Founder and Executive Chairman, Foster + Partners, said: "This has to be one of the most exciting projects in the world today, with incredible regional and national significance. It all starts with the fans' experience, bringing them closer than ever to the pitch and acoustically cultivating a huge roar. The stadium is contained by a vast umbrella, harvesting energy and rainwater, and sheltering a new public plaza that is twice the size of Trafalgar Square."



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The design creates a processional route from a new train station to the plaza, which would serve as a welcoming focal point for fan gatherings and community events.



The masts support a translucent canopy that envelopes the stadium, wrapping around the stands and shielding a generous public plaza from rainfall.

The outward-looking stadium would be the beating heart of a new sustainable district, which is completely walkable, served by public transport, and endowed by nature. It is a mixed-use miniature city of the future – driving a new wave of growth and creating a global destination that Mancunians can be proud of.”

Sir Jim Ratcliffe, Co-owner of Manchester United, said: “Today marks the start of an incredibly exciting journey to the delivery of what will be the world’s greatest football stadiums, at the centre of a regenerated Old Trafford. Our current stadium has served us brilliantly for the past 115 years, but it has fallen behind the best arenas in world sport. By building next to the existing site, we will be able to preserve the essence of Old Trafford, while creating a truly state-of-the-art stadium that transforms the fan experience only footsteps from our historic home. Just as important is the opportunity for a new stadium to be the catalyst for social and economic renewal of the Old Trafford area, creating jobs and investment not just during the construction phase but on a lasting basis when the stadium district is complete. The Government has identified infrastructure investment as a strategic priority, particularly in the north of England, and we are proud to be supporting that mission with this project of national, as well as local, significance.”

Nigel Dancey, Head of Studio, Foster + Partners, said: “The new stadium design is a celebration of the unique and extraordinary history of Manchester United – and will provide a world-class experience for its 1.1 billion global fans and followers. Three towering masts hold up the stadium’s canopy, embodying the club’s trident emblem, and creating a distinctive presence on the skyline. Teamwork and the city’s renowned spirit of innovation are cornerstones of this remarkable project, which would look to embrace the network of the Manchester Ship Canal and cutting-edge prefabrication technologies to build the stadium in record time.”

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said: “Transformation of the area around Old Trafford forms an important part of our ten-year plan to turbocharge

growth across the Greater Manchester region. By investing in public transport infrastructure, homes and amenities around the new stadium district, and relocating freight from the Trafford Park container terminal, we can unlock huge benefits for the whole of the north-west. We are ready to move forward and will be linking together central government, our councils and communities, and the club to make sure we maximise this opportunity.”

Informed by the city’s incredible history, the sports-led regeneration project would transform the one-million square metre brownfield site into a thriving mixed-use district, with a network of green civic spaces, streets, bridges, and waterfront areas. Setting a new international benchmark for sustainable city developments, the project forges direct transport and pedestrian connections between new and existing communities – and the wider city – while harnessing opportunities for rainwater collection and renewable energy. The potential removal of freight trains from the West Coast Main Line would act as a catalyst for the project by increasing passenger numbers to Manchester Piccadilly and the north-west region, creating better rail connections with Liverpool, and freeing up land for the Old Trafford Stadium District.

Inverting the traditional model of football stadium design, the new stadium concept is open and outward facing with wraparound balconies that overlook the wider development. Located at the centre of the district, it would be a globally recognisable landmark, encapsulating Manchester United’s spirit and the city’s heritage. The stadium features three soaring masts, which take inspiration from the Red Devil’s trident emblem and reflect the verticality of Manchester’s industrial skyline. The masts support a translucent canopy that envelopes the stadium, wrapping around the stands and shielding a generous public plaza from rainfall.

The covered plaza features a range of interactive experiences for Manchester United’s fans and global visitors – and overlooks the city’s famous Bridgewater Canal that runs adjacent to the site. The practice’s design creates a processional route from a new train station to the plaza, which would serve as a welcoming focal point for fan gatherings and community events.

The 100,000-seater stadium bowl provides an unrivalled match day experience, increasing fans’ proximity to the pitch and creating an intimate atmosphere with outstanding acoustics. Modular offsite prefabrication and use of the Manchester Ship Canal would significantly increase the speed of construction.

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