



26th June 2026

Dear Development Management

119265/FUL/26 Manchester United Car Park FOCM Response

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this planning application. We are particularly disappointed that Manchester United did not consider it was necessary to consult with communities in advance of submission. We hope that, in reading this response, our views and suggestions will be taken into consideration.

Once again, this is a planning application that ignores the first criterion in the Places for Everyone JPA 30 policy, which **requires** development to be “*in accordance with a masterplan that has been developed in consultation with the local community*”. We would remind decision-makers that paragraph 641 of the Planning Inspectors’ Report¹ states “*it is not appropriate for the policy to allow for certain parts of the site to come forward in advance of any masterplan*”.

This is important because that Masterplan has not yet been produced and, confusingly, it seems that this site is expected to be used for several purposes, including:

- mitigation and compensation related to other developments (to provide a wildlife corridor between Birch Moss Covert and the Shell Pool Reserve)
- warehousing
- the Birch Road/Eastern Link Road.

Trafford must also consider what precedents would result from approving this retrospective planning application and the provision of car parking, which will encourage further car dependency in the allocation area.

In addition, whilst it is clear from developer responses to other planning applications that they have more information about what is in the Masterplan than communities, making a decision on this scheme in advance of that Masterplan being produced could obstruct, restrict or limit other proposals, including those securing mitigation and compensation for the huge levels of cumulative harm to be caused to natural capital and ecosystem services within the New Carrington boundary.

We note that the applicant selectively quotes Green Belt policy from the NPPF but makes no mention of Grey Belt. It is clear from the Wain Estates response to the Carrington Relief Road (CRR) planning application that they consider that much of their estate has “*current or future development potential*”. Wain’s concern about the amount of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be provided in relation to the CRR suggests a clear intention to exploit Grey Belt rules to increase the amount of development proposals in the area. Approving this car park scheme, alongside 4 new roads, will reduce the current very limited protection of Green Belt land provided by the NPPF.

The application specifically highlights that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, that the NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that decision makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development.

This is not an application for sustainable development.

¹ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/9282/pfe-inspectors-report-01-final.pdf>



It is not sustainable to continue to promote car use to the site, encouraging car dependency and the associated air, noise, light, vibration, dust and water pollution, putting at risk the health, wellbeing and safety of other users of the single track road to the training centre. It is not sustainable to put a car park on very deep peat nor to remove (as has been done) existing ecologically rich vegetation to create an area completely devoid of biodiversity. And it is not sustainable behaviour to avoid responsibilities for nature's recovery by using retrospective planning permission to exploit the BNG loophole.

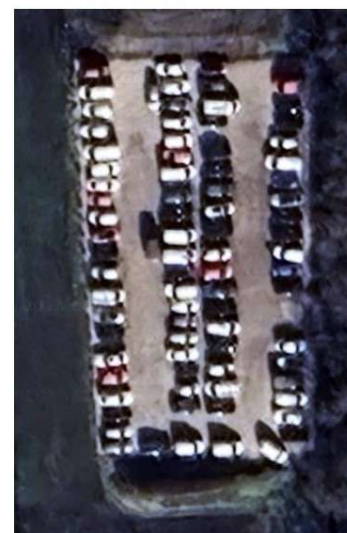
27th October 2024



14th November 2024



6th March 2025



Source: GoogleEarth

The applicant repeatedly states throughout its documentation that Manchester United is a world leading football club. It is clearly not world leading in sustainable operations.

The applicant states (3.2) that the proposal is needed to ease parking constraints at the site until a more long-term solution is secured and to ensure that the centre continues to “*meet the requirements of Manchester United, a world-leading football club*”. There is no indication of what the long-term solution is, nor what those requirements are. There is also no explanation of why this car park will be no longer needed when the temporary 3 year period expires. The application just suggests that use will cease.

The application (4.3) rather understates what was done to create the ‘temporary’ car park. Not only were two mature trees removed, but all other vegetation was also totally stripped from the site. GoogleEarth suggests the car park was fully in use by March 2025 (not August, as suggested in the planning application documentation).

The Planning and Green Belt Statement selectively considers Places for Everyone (PFE) policies. There is, however, no mention of the PFE Strategic Objective 6 (to promote the sustainable movement of people, goods and information). In the period between March 2025 and now, surely a world-leading organisation of the size and scale of Manchester United would have the capability to secure a sustainable transport solution to “*mitigate the capacity constraints*” (6.2) at their training centre.

The Planning and Green Belt Statement also quotes selectively from NPPF policies. We do not believe this world-leading organisation can seriously consider a very small, unsustainable, car-dependent solution to be a demonstration of the ‘very special circumstances’ required by NPPF paragraph 153.

The efficient operation of their facility and the mitigation of capacity constraints should be supported by sustainable transport solutions.



It should be noted that any “*wider benefits to the economy and community of Greater Manchester*” (6.13) are significantly outweighed by the health, wellbeing and safety implications of so many cars being encouraged to use a wholly inappropriate single track route that this is a much used (by walkers, cyclists and horse riders), the prevention of the development under policy 116 of the NPPF would be correct.

The most obvious alternative option would be for Manchester United to provide bespoke bus services to and from specific catchment locations (such as schools) and, given that the Transport Technical Note (TTN) makes it clear that the temporary additional car park will not eliminate peak period pressures, the implementation of this much more sustainable solution should be accelerated.

A bespoke solution is needed because, as acknowledged in the TTN, the training centre is some distance from the nearest public transport facilities. It is interesting that the applicant suggests that many vehicles using the training centre have multiple occupants. That is not what local users of the route have observed.

The TTN highlights the huge number of vehicles travelling down this single track route, adding to the risk of collision with people and animals. At least 56 vehicles in the space of 1 hour in the example shown (29th April), and that does not include vehicles leaving the site during that period.

The application makes no mention of the very deep peat that underpins the site and the area surrounding it. Whilst this is a very small site, the England Peat Map suggests that this area hosts the deepest parts of the peat on Carrington Moss (which Natural England considers to be a restorable irreplaceable habitat). Given the carbon implications of this unsustainable, car-dependent solution, together with the loss of, or damage to, the wider peat moss, the application is not compliant with paragraphs 161 or 164 of the NPPF.

Furthermore, the scheme and the cumulative impacts of proposed development on Carrington Moss are not compliant with NPPF paragraph 198. This scheme will increase exposure to air, noise, light, vibration, dust and water pollution. It will impact the intrinsically dark skies of the area, disturbing endangered wildlife species (which will also be affected by traffic volumes, particularly in the darker winter months).

That Manchester United is seeking to avoid BNG through the submission of a retrospective planning application is shameful, especially given that low cost ecological benefits could be provided in the form of ditch improvements and additional hedgerow, which could support biodiversity enhancements around the site. The ‘walkover’ conducted in April 2026 is irrelevant given the harms to the site had already been caused (as shown in the GoogleEarth graphics above).

We note that the replacement trees are planned to be located within the Manchester United Training Ground, so, unlike those lost, will bring no benefit to the wider community. The application suggests that the trees will be replaced with Silver Birch and, whilst we recognise the ‘connection’ with Birch Road, this is not what we would recommend.

The ability of the Birch tree to naturally regenerate is highly effective, this is evident around the area of the scheme, where self-seeding is prolific. We would suggest planting mature Black Poplar, which is a declining species in the UK and is valuable to wildlife and birds. The female trees are rarer than the males and produce no pollen, which would be beneficial to sports participants who are allergy sufferers (the Birch has highly allergenic tree pollen).

As mentioned above, this planning application is not compliant with PpE policy, and there are no genuine material considerations that suggest it should not be determined in accordance with the development plan. We suggest, therefore, that it should be refused.

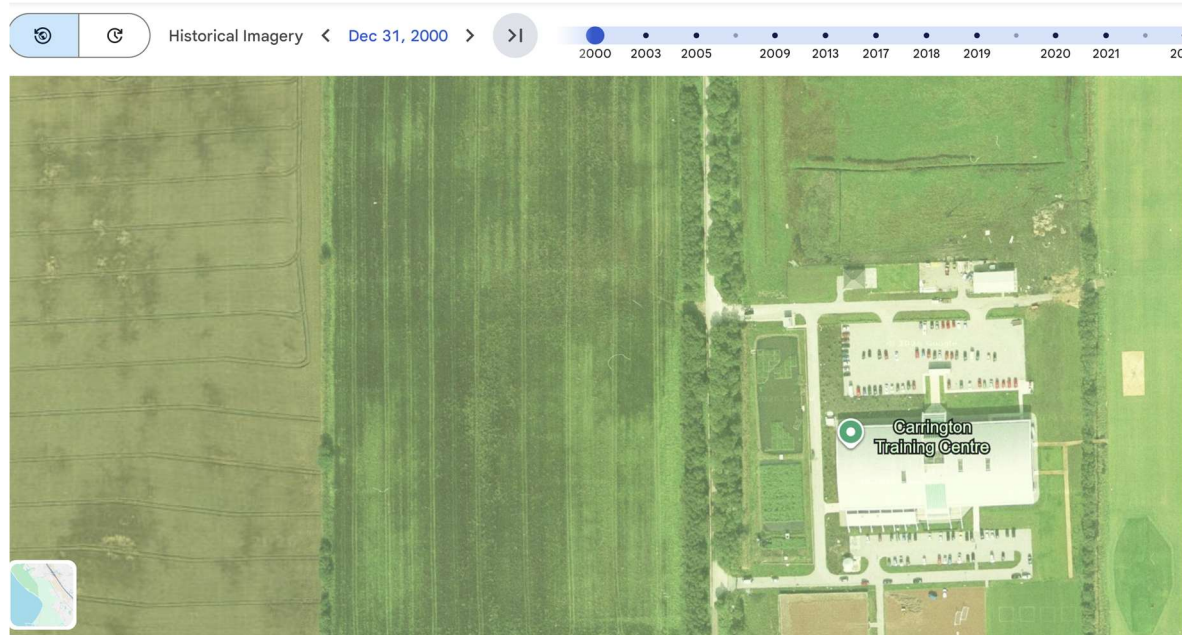
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As set out in this objection, we do not believe this application exemplifies sustainable development. Manchester United's latest [Annual Report](#) suggests that "*All Red All Equal represents Manchester United's dedication to creating a more equitable, sustainable, healthier world*". Yet they are not dedicated enough to ensure that their visitors are travelling by bus to their training ground! They also have a 'Reds Go Green' initiative, mentioned in the Sustainability section of the Annual Report but, although this [BBC article](#) suggests that they "*actively manage the biodiversity of the Carrington Nature Reserve and use it as an educational tool*", there is no evidence that this is the case.

We'd like to encourage Manchester United to have the courage of their convictions (ie turning the principles set out in their Annual Report into decisive, consistent action) and, as a minimum, accelerate a sustainable solution to the mitigation of their capacity constraints. This should be easy for them to do, particularly for activities that are planned in advance.

This would mean that this land can be returned to its previous state, as shown on Google Earth, a deep peat moss overlain by Grade 2 agricultural land which is sustaining populations of ground nesting red listed birds, such as the Skylark, and other threatened species.



Kind regards

Marj Powner (Chair)

Friends of Carrington Moss