



FC UNITED OF MANCHESTER

**PRE APPLICATION DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR RENEWAL OF PLANNING
CONSENT FOR ACADEMY & COMMUNITY CABIN**

APRIL 2021



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1 In August 2017 Fc United of Manchester obtained planning permission for the renewal of an existing temporary consent for a single storey modular building fronting Lightbowne Road used as the Clubs Academy and Community Cabin and 2 x storage containers to the edge of the car park at Broadhurst Park. This permission has now expired and it has been agreed that the Club will remove the 2 storage containers whilst making an application to retain the academy cabin for a period of three years.
- 2 There are a number of reasons why the Club needs to retain the Cabin, primarily:
 - (a) When originally applying for a temporary consent for the Academy & Community Cabin the Club had initially planned to utilise a space under the St Marys Road End stand for its prime community and academy use. The Club has now successfully developed this space however because of the current Covid crisis this space is now being utilised as a community food hub collecting, distributing and organising food parcels to members of the local community who are vulnerable during these times. There is no other space in the ground where this can take place and It would not be desirable to cease this extremely valuable community work which is so important during these troubled times and is charitable work which has gained national recognition. See Appendix 2.
 - (b) The Fc United Academy has proved to be more successful than the Club envisaged. The Academy has gone from 34 scholars in 2018/19 to 73 students this year which represents a 40 % increase. This is of course extremely good news for the Club and the young people of North Manchester as the Academy provides a fantastic pathway into sport and further education for these local 16 -18 year olds. It does however put pressure on the Clubs physical resource in terms of available space. Given the students have to spilt into separate modules for studying and the increased pressure current social distancing requirements are bringing to bear the space the Cabin provides is essential to allow the Club to continue to operate the Academy.
 - (c) The Club has always held equal opportunities as a fundamental tenet within its guiding principles. With this in mind the Club has long held an aspiration to establish a women's Academy to run alongside the current male academy. This will then provide a positive and unique educational and sporting pathway for young females in North Manchester and it is hoped that this can be launched in the near future. Again suitable academic space within Broadhurst Park will be essential in order to progress this aspiration and the Cabin is central to this.
- 3 In summary, whilst the existing containers provide useful storage space, it recognises that it would be the right thing to do in terms of maintaining its positive relationship within the community to remove the containers from site but the Club does need to retain the Academy & Community Cabin to continue its valuable community and educational initiatives. The Clubs long term desire is to find a permanent solution for academy provision within Broadhurst Park but this will take some time to resource and facilitate.

2. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 It is suggested that there are 3 material planning considerations pertaining to this proposal :
 - (a) useage,
 - (b) visual amenity, and,
 - (c) loss of open space

Useage

- 2 With regard to useage of the Cabin the Club first secured planning consent for the Academy & Community Cabin in 2015 and it has been in continual operational since then. The Cabin has been used for educational, community and Club operational activities and there have, to the Clubs knowledge, been no negative issues raised during this time. To be clear there have been no issues which might be considered to be material planning considerations such as noise, disturbance, operational hours, comings and goings, ant-social behaviour, parking etc and therefore the Club would contend that the given use of the Cabin is acceptable in planning terms.

Visual amenity

- 3 During the original planning process for the development of Broadhurst Park the Club and the City Council put considerable effort and resource into creating a stadium of which it could be proud of in design terms. Indeed the stadium has won awards and is without doubt one if not the best football grounds in the UK at this level of football. With this in mind again considerable effort was put into ensuring that the Community & Academy Cabin did not detract from the setting of the main stadium and a crowdfunder was organised within the support to raise funds to ensure the basic cabin shell the club had acquired could be transformed into a more visually attractive form.
- 4 To this end the cabin was clad in timber to match the main elevations of the stadium (a timber railway sleeper design reference that was taken from the Clubs Manchester United\ Newton Heath railway worker origins), landscaped to soften its edges, fitted with appropriately designed signage to announce and animate the building with disabled access provision provided to ensure accessibility for all. See Appendix 1 photographs 1 and 2.
- 5 The Cabin is modest in size and scale and located well away from the closest residential properties (See Appendix 1 photographs 4 and 5) and coupled with the maturing of the timber cladding and landscaping the Club would argue that the Cabin blends in well within its setting and does not detract from visual amenity within Broadhurst Park. Indeed the cabin can barely be seen from the adjacent highway due the presence of the hawthorn hedge on site. See Appendix 1 photographs 7 and 8.

- 6 The above argument was born out in the Councils committee report for the original planning application for the Cabin which noted:

“It should be noted that the modular building is not located within close proximity to any residential properties. As such, there should be no residential disamenity arising from the structure or its use. Furthermore, the structure will adequately be screened from Lightbowne Road by the existing hedge and trees.

Whilst the footprint and scale of the building will make it visible within the site, it is considered to sit well within the overall setting and scale of buildings at Broadhurst Park. In addition, the building has been minimised in terms of its appearance through the use of cladding system which resembles that on the main stand.”

Loss of open space

- 7 As part of the originally considered design process for Broadhurst Park, as referred to above, there was a keen desire to maintain a sense of openness around Broadhurst Park which was essentially achieved through the majority of the site being occupied by the grass Ronald Johnson Playing Fields, the new 3G pitch, the retention of existing mature landscape features and soft scaping around the stadium and the addition of new landscaped areas such as the raised lawns to the front elevation.

- 8 The Club would contend that the cabin, with its modest footprint occupies a very limited part of the original open space. Broadhurst Park occupies 5.2 hectares of land and the Cabin just 2% of this. Additionally, the Club would argue that the space occupied is not the most valuable or well used open space within the site - an argument which is born out by the Councils Committee report for the original planning application (110364/fo/2015/N1) for the Cabin which stated:

“it should be noted that the application sites are not considered to be the most sensitive areas of amenity space at Broadhurst Park (which are considered to be those located in front of the main stand) thus allowing these to be available for the community for recreational purposes and preserve the landscaped setting of the main stadium.

3. CONCLUSION

- 9 In conclusion the Club would contend that the Cabin provides vital space to enable the Club to continue its vital community and educational work. Without this space the Club could not continue this work. In planning terms the existence of the Cabin in this location has no material detrimental impact in terms of residential or visual amenity and any minor loss of open space is outweighed by the benefit of valuable continued community activity on the site. The Club does have a firm aspiration to provide a permanent solution to house the Academy within Broadhurst Park and work is underway to investigate this but clearly this is a significant project which will take time to resource and facilitate.

4. APPENDIX 1: SITE PHOTOGRAGHS

- 1 Fc United of Manchester Community & Academy Cabin



2. Close up of the Cabin illustrating matured landscaping and timber cladding to match stadium detail



3. View of cabin from within Broadhurst Park



4. View of Cabin from rear of nearest residential properties



5. View of cabin from St Marys Road



6. View towards Cabin from Ronald Johnson Playing Fields



7. View towards the Cabin looking north along Lightbourne Road



8. View towards the Cabin looking south along Lightbourne Road



5. APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY USE OF EXISTING SPACE

1. Ongoing community work during the pandemic utilising the existing FCUM space



A huge thanks to our wonderful community partners FC United of Manchester who have donated 250 visors to our team at EachStep Blackley. These guys have made a staggering effort to support all kinds of people in our local community during this tough time... proving, yet again, that this sport offers so much more to us than just 2 hours a week of kicking a ball around a field! [#communityspirit](#)



2. Expressions of gratitude for community work

