

# The Stadium: Iconic Urban Masterpiece or Expensive Destructor of City Centre Social Cohesion?

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**Stadia design has changed dramatically in recent years due in part to changes in health and safety guidelines and the emergence of new commercial opportunities. Unfortunately, this has led to many recent examples where stadia have become divorced from the social fabric of the cities they once served. This paper seeks to explore the role that surrounding social infrastructure and other enabling developments can have in binding the stadium typology back into the urban and social fabric of our cities.**

## THE STADIUM

Stadia are some of the most iconic and powerful urban projects of our time. Places in which history is marked, memories raised and passions evoked. The world however is littered with new examples which are increasingly divorced from the social fabric of the cities they once served.

In the United Kingdom, the Ibrox Stadium disaster in Scotland, in 1971, in which 66 spectators lost their lives, forced a sea change in new standards of crowd safety. The inquiry by Lord Wheatley and his recommendations were published in 1973, dawning the beginning of a new generation of stadium design. In 1971, concurrent with this tragedy, FaulknerBrowns were designing a new stand at St James's Park, the home of Newcastle United FC, in which they introduced new safety measures through the layout of spectator stands and exit routes which were later compiled into the revised versions of the Wheatley recommendations, and became known as "The Green Guide for Safety at Sports Grounds". This new guide began to put pressure on sports organisations - particularly soccer clubs - to review the adequacy of their facilities.

This was later followed by the increasing focus on new business models involving lucrative TV rights deals, which fuelled the demand for ever bigger stadia with the focus on entertainment and the support infrastructure this requires.

The combination of these two factors has contributed to the demand for larger stadium footprints forcing clubs to consider moving to sites on the city fringes, where land is cheaper to acquire and more plentiful. Whilst these locations often have better provisions for parking, public transport links are often sacrificed and fans suffer from a feeling of detachment from the historical sense of place enjoyed at the previous stadium.

However, not all clubs have adopted this approach. The new stand added to St James' Park in 1973 increased the stadium capacity considerably and over the following years further expansions saw the capacity rise to over 52,000. The stadium enjoys a central location right in the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne. On match days fans can still enjoy local hospitality in the surrounding bars and restaurants, contributing to the pre-match atmosphere in the city and supporting the local economy.

St James' is an unusual example and increasingly new stadia are located some distance from their roots. Whilst match days enjoy all the fanfare of a state of the art entertainment experience, these sites typically have poor social connectivity to their surrounding locations. This paper seeks to explore not the stadia themselves but the enabling development and surrounding social infrastructure that have helped to bind the stadium typology back into the urban and social fabric of our cities.

In particular our examples will examine:

- Funding and masterplan infrastructure
- Support infrastructure for health and wellbeing - 'a sports city'
- Social infrastructure
- Physical context and building next to a stadium

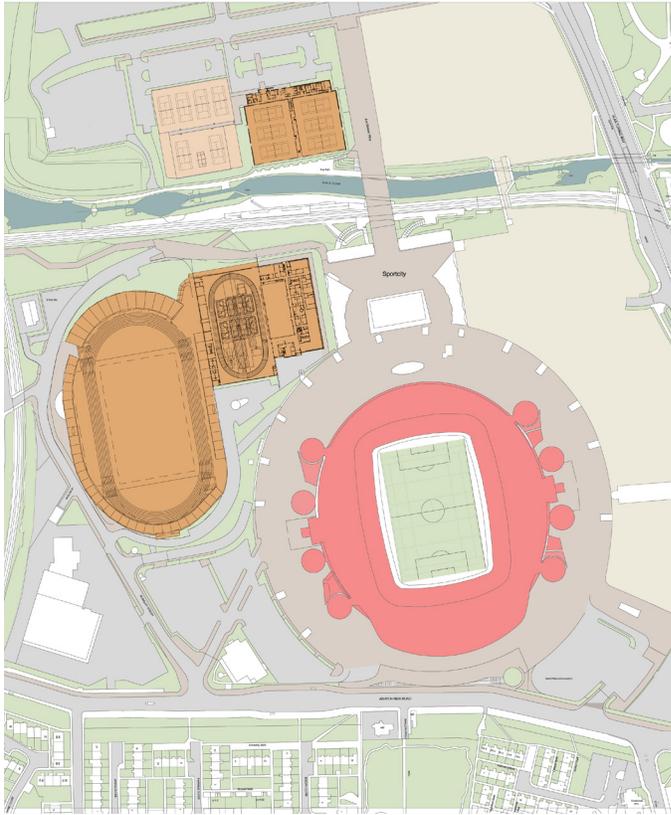
## BRENTFORD COMMUNITY STADIUM

Brentford is a town in west London with a population of around 28,000 people. It is home to Brentford Football Club, a side which competes in the second tier of the English Football League system. Currently based at the 12,300 capacity stadium Griffin Park, the side are looking to relocate to a new purpose built 20,000 capacity stadium, built on land less than a mile from the current stadium.

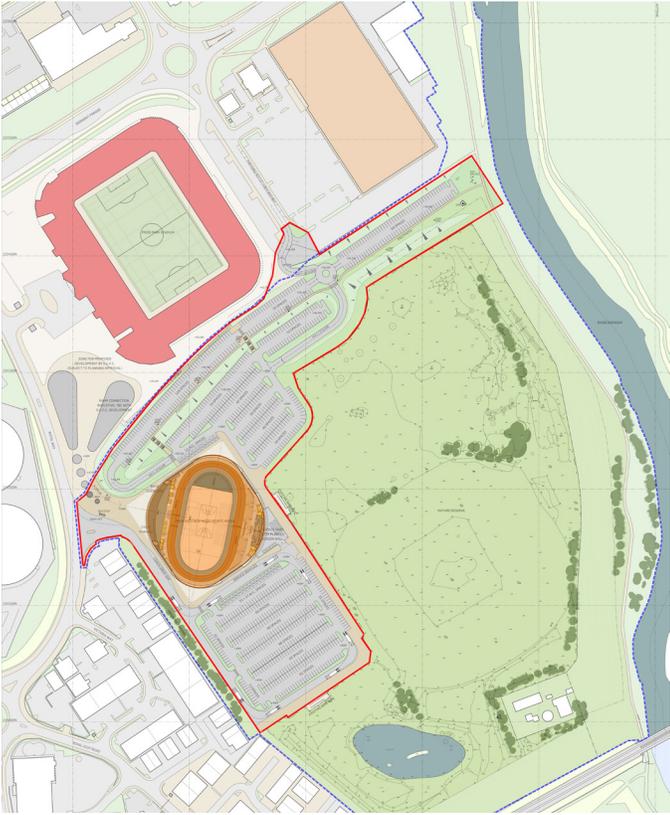
FaulknerBrowns were appointed by Brentford Football Club to develop a masterplan for the delivery of the new 20,000 capacity community stadium and a mix of enabling development which would create sufficient value to raise the required funding. Although housing forms a large part of this enabling development, the masterplan includes a range of community sports and social facilities - as well as vital infrastructure and public realm improvements - that will bring wider public value. This includes direct access to the neighbouring railway station as well as improved connectivity to the adjacent M4 motorway and Kew Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Brentford Community Stadium and associated masterplan



City of Manchester Stadium and Manchester Sportcity



Pride Park Stadium and Derby Arena



Stadium of Light and Beacon of Light

Figure 1: Four UK Stadia and referenced developments in their immediate context.



Figure 2: Brentford Community Stadium and the enabling development which surrounds it.

The highly complex £250 million (\$300 million) development will result in the comprehensive regeneration of a large triangle of urban hinterland cut off from adjacent communities by surrounding railway lines on all three sides. This will provide economic stimulus to the area, creating a number of new employment and training opportunities for local people.

The stadium development also provides improved - and more accessible - facilities for the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust charity. Established in 1987, it was amongst the first pioneering programmes aimed at engaging soccer clubs with their communities. The new facilities will enable the trust to continue to contribute to sports participation, education, health and social inclusion in the local community.

The Brentford Community Stadium masterplan represents more than simply a venue for professional sport. It provides a foundation for the emergence of a new community in an area of great potential. The designs for the stadium, and in particular for its public areas, inside and out, have been developed with this ambition of community in mind. By linking previously disconnected public amenities and providing additional leisure offerings including cafes, bars and restaurants, the site will be transformed into a destination with substantial visitor appeal and employment opportunities. The building of the new stadium, depending

as it does on the residential development on the surrounding land, will be an inevitable catalyst for the physical regeneration of the whole area.

#### MANCHESTER SPORTCITY

Manchester is a major city in the northwest of England with a population of around 530,000. It lies within the UK's second-most populous urban area, Greater Manchester, which has a population of around 2.7 million. Blessed with the powerful combination of a far-seeing and charismatic Council Leader, Richard Leese and Chief Executive, Howard Bernstein, the city's response to the devastating effect of the 1996 IRA bombing in Manchester was to launch an ambitious programme of redevelopment - not just of the city centre but for the whole of Greater Manchester. The symbolic 'phoenix from the ashes' was Sportcity which contains the largest concentration of sporting and commercial facilities in Europe.

Having won the bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2002, Manchester was explicit in its commitment that the games - to be staged with Sportcity as the main venue for athletics, squash and table tennis - would deliver a long-lasting and sustainable legacy and provide the catalyst for the whole scale regeneration of a large area of the city.

Sportcity was to comprise: an indoor sports centre containing a 200m regional-standard athletics track; a seven court national centre for squash; regional sports science and sports medicine laboratories and test areas; and an eight court indoor regional tennis centre.



Figure 3: An aerial view of the City of Manchester Stadium and Manchester Sportcity.

Long term flexibility was embedded in the design approach to maximise legacy value. The squash centre was linked into the indoor athletics arena through a giant hangar-like door enabling the show glass court (erected on top of a hovercraft platform) to be floated into the massive athletics track infield, where it could be surrounded with temporary spectator tribunes for major events - including of course for the Commonwealth Games themselves. Every other space was used to temporarily house essential facilities for the games and revert to its normal function. The indoor tennis centre was relatively easily adapted for table tennis for the games.

Bernstein's vision for the athletics stadium as a building type was not "construction and then destruction", but as a highly flexible model which could house athletics in games mode - with 40,000 spectators - and then change to a lucrative Premier League soccer venue with 55,000 seats, where the spectator tribunes hug the edges of the pitch.

English Premier League side Manchester City Football Club agreed to take on the stadium post games as their new home and base, moving into the remodelled stadium in 2004. With the purchase of the club by foreign owners in 2008 the area around the stadium has recently seen a further lease of life with the recent development of a soccer training academy - the new £200m (\$240m) Etihad campus hailed by many to be one of the finest in the world. The next phase is to be a series of leisure

developments around the stadium at the Eastlands site, including hotel and extreme sports all consolidating the 'City' brand.

Conversion of the stadium's field of play from athletics to soccer initially raised questions as to the future of athletics in Manchester post-games. However, part of the Council's masterplan was that the athletics warm-up track, instead of being torn up after the games, would be transformed into a 4,000 seat, low-cost and highly-efficient regional and community standard athletics stadium, utilising the adjacent indoor sports centre for changing rooms and officials' accommodation. The atmosphere in the stadium is intimate and much loved by international standard athletes who welcome the track's tight enclosure with its protection from wind provided by the doughnut of covered stands. Consequently, it has become not just a popular training and regional performance centre, but also an arena for national and international competition.

Sportcity is a social and financial success and continues to prosper. It is an expression of benign political power and it contains iconic buildings and novel approaches in structure and fit-out. But, above all, it is well-used at all levels by the community who find it attractive and comfortable to use. Its greatest compliment lies in the number of occasions that its realistic approach to achieving a sustainable legacy has been copied by other countries bidding for international events.

#### DERBY ARENA

With a population of around 250,000 people, Derby is the 22nd largest city in England and home to Derby County Football Club. Based at Pride Park Stadium (formerly the iPro Stadium) in Pride Park on the outskirts of the city, the side is currently challenging for promotion to the English Premier League.

In 2010, Derby City Council announced an ambitious £50m (\$64m) leisure strategy which aimed to promote active lifestyle choices and increase participation in sport across all demographics. The strategy allocated a significant portion of the investment to substantially upgrade the city's underutilised leisure facilities.

A central element to this plan was the construction of Derby Arena, a £24m (\$31m) velodrome and community leisure facility adjacent to Pride Park Stadium. Not only would this landmark venue aim to inspire participation in cycling, but also encourage people of all ages and abilities to engage with a diverse range of sport and leisure activities.

Neighbouring this new community facing facility to the city's most iconic sports facility not only allowed Derby Arena to benefit from the excellent infrastructure and transport links already in place at the site, but it also created a distinct sport and leisure destination for the city.

Pride Park as well as being home to the city's largest professional sports team, also contains a 'Park and Ride' service for shoppers wishing to park outside of the city and travel on a dedicated bus service into the city centre. This, alongside the stadium, and a range of other commercial developments, make the location one of the most visible and trafficked locations in Derby, with a large proportion of the local population making use of the surrounding facilities for entertainment purposes. This made



Figure 4: Pride Park Stadium (formerly named the iPro Stadium) and the neighbouring Derby Arena.

it an ideal location for a community sport facility. Dialogue undertaken at the early stages of planning between the soccer club, local council and the project team meant that complications associated with match-day transport planning were considered and mitigated.

The design of the arena itself was founded on the principles of flexibility and inclusivity. The multi-purpose arena accommodates a 250m cycling track, 12 court sports hall and fitness centre, as well as event space which is capable of supporting a year round calendar of entertainment.

Traditionally, facilities for cycling have been inward facing, and have struggled to find sustainable uses for the vast infield space cut adrift by the banked cycling track. Where the infield has found other uses, access to and from the space has been difficult, with a complex arrangement of ramps and tunnels required.

The design of Derby Arena improved accessibility to the infield by raising the cycle track upwards to first floor level. This innovation delivered unimpeded access to the central infield from ground level without compromising cycling activities. Enough space was then created to accommodate a sports hall large enough for 12 badminton courts, or a combination of sporting activities including netball, volleyball, futsal and table tennis.

In addition, the flexible infield was now suitable to host a diverse range of events for up to 5,000 spectators in a variety of configurations. This would open up the facility to an even broader section of the local community and provide a more varied offering.

The arena provides a lasting legacy from the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games providing sporting opportunities that support wider participation and motivation. The interconnected arrangement of the activities within creates a socially engaging and inclusive environment which has been well received by users. The 'added value' of the cultural events the arena can now offer has greatly expanded the social reach

of the wider Pride Park development, creating a sport and leisure destination that is delivering real health and wellbeing benefits to the city's population.

#### BEACON OF LIGHT

With a population of around 175,000 people, Sunderland is the 35th largest city in England and home to Sunderland Association Football Club (AFC). Based at the Stadium of Light on the outskirts of the city, the side is currently playing in the highest tier of English soccer, the EPL.

Like many major sporting organisations, Sunderland AFC supports a number of charitable organisations, including the Foundation of Light. Established in 2001 by former club Chairman Sir Bob Murray CBE and named after the club's iconic stadium, the charity uses the power of soccer to involve, educate and inspire a generation of young people and their families. Whilst many English Premier League clubs have a charitable foundation, the Foundation of Light is one of the country's foremost innovators in the sector.

Working with more than 42,000 people every year the Foundation of Light employs a highly-skilled team of more than 130 professional teachers, health workers, soccer coaches, family learning officers, youth workers and support staff as well as a network of volunteers.

The Foundation currently has 35 copyrighted education programmes, some of which are nationally recognised and accredited. These have historically been delivered out of classrooms within the Stadium of Light, in local schools, community centres and at bespoke outreach centres throughout the local area. However as the charity has grown it has established the need to locate itself within a bespoke environment to expand the scope of their work.

The proposed new centre was named the Beacon of Light and a plot of land secured adjacent to the stadium. As with the previous example the existing infrastructure and transport links would help in ensuring the new facility was easily accessible to a large segment of the local population.



Figure 5: Beacon of Light illuminated at night as it sits alongside the Stadium of Light.

In this case, the backdrop of the revered stadium would also act as a powerful inspiration to the young people and their families, seeking out educational opportunities in the pursuit of a brighter future.

The Beacon of Light will be the first of its kind in the UK, a unique centre consisting of engaging and interactive zones in education; health and fitness; sport and play; and the world of work.

Welcoming over 300,000 children, young people and adults through its doors every year, it will provide a vibrant and feel-good environment where people can meet socially; where they can learn and take part in courses to gain skills and qualifications; and where their fascination and love of soccer will start them on a journey that will help them make choices to improve their lives.

The building form and choice of materials combine so that when illuminated at night the facility transforms into a Beacon of hope, shining light on the adjacent stadium, both visible across the city.

#### URBAN CATALYSTS AND SOCIAL ENABLERS

The Brentford Community Stadium and Manchester Sportcity examples, whilst on different scales, both necessitated a masterplan approach for their context. In the case of Brentford, the delivery of the stadium itself is entirely dependent upon the commercial enabling development from the sale of surrounding residential properties. In the case of Manchester Sportcity this was a masterplan built around a successful Commonwealth Games bid, focussed initially on a sporting legacy from the games. The Derby and Sunderland stadia on the other hand have experienced a more incremental process. Both of these stadia were built as part of an urban regeneration process and the surrounding areas developed subsequently.

The task of integrating stadia into the urban and social fabric of our cities is a common challenge. These large buildings are often highly repetitive structures reaching heights in excess of 30 to 40 metres (100 to 130 feet), and are often visually impenetrable with little interaction with the ground plane. Also, the logistical requirement of servicing and maintaining the match day movements of large numbers of fans requires careful consideration.

The designs for Sunderland Beacon of Light and Derby Arena address these challenges in different ways. The brief for the Beacon of Light requires a combination of learning spaces, a sports hall and a covered indoor soccer training barn. The approach of stacking the soccer barn on top of a simple brick box containing the sports hall and educational programme, affords a sense of height and scale consistent with the adjoining stadium, and frees up space at ground level to accommodate activity in the form of revenue producing 5-a-side soccer pitches. The upper barn requires a lower level of environmental performance compared with the rest of the programme and the needs can be accommodated by enclosing these with a lightweight translucent cladding material forming a spectacular glowing box next to the stadium - a literal symbol of knowledge and the power of sport to transform people's lives.

Derby Arena, in contrast to the simple - yet elegant - cube at Sunderland, expresses the dynamic movement of cyclists spinning around a banked wooden track through a constant ribbon of cladding, which is lifted at the front and rear allowing users to directly engage with the entrance, café and infield of the building. This strong dynamic form provides counterpoint to the static typology of most stadia.

So whilst the stadia themselves might very well be the stars of the show, it is often a carefully planned support act in the guise of supporting social, sporting and enabling infrastructure that might mean the difference between urban and political success or failure.