

Real Madrid stadium revamp gets ready for Taylor Swift, faces new corruption allegations

By  Lindsey Schutters

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After a successful vote by the Real Madrid board of directors to [approve a €370m debt plan](#) to finance additional renovations for the club's Santiago Bernabéu stadium remodelling, the Madrid Council is now [facing fresh allegations](#) of improper process regarding the parking project. The project, which promises to provide around 2,000 additional parking spots, has been met with opposition from a local union.



Architect render of the Santiago Bernabéu. Source: GMP Architekten

The union has lodged two complaints through the Madrid courts, arguing that the underground parking project lacks both a security and environmental impact study. They further contend that there is no evidence of community benefit, suggesting a misuse of public funds to favour private entities, specifically Real Madrid.

The European Commission has now received a fourth legal complaint, alleging the project's non-compliance with European environmental policy, with complainants arguing that the project will exacerbate traffic and necessitate the removal of 92 longstanding trees in the area.



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Deputy Mayor Inmaculada Sanz has defended the project, asserting that it will 'improve mobility and the quality of life in the area', and that all planning processes have met regulations. She cites the provision of 547 parking spaces for residents and dedicated underground platforms for bus stops as evidence of community benefit, despite residents losing access to 600 parking spots.

The project, which includes the construction of an underground car park with a direct tunnel to the stadium and the removal of two public roads, will cost the Madrid Council around €11m. Upon completion, the car park's management will be leased to Real Madrid Estadio, a subsidiary of Real Madrid, for 40 years. Despite the project's public nature and substantial profit margins, Real Madrid Estadio was the sole bidder for the lease.

Ambitious project

The Santiago Bernabéu, originally built in 1947 and designed by architects Manuel Muñoz Monasterio and Luis Alemany Soler, is one of the world's best-known stadiums. It has seen several additions and renovations since its inception.

The latest revamp, which began in 2019, aimed to give the stadium a unified appearance with the new louvred steel façade is the product of architectural firms L35, Ribas & Ribas, and GMP Architekten (who also had a hand in the Moses Mabhida and Nelson Mandela Bay Stadiums for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa).

Renovations includes a retractable roof, a steel facade, a terrace surrounding the stadium on top of the stands, and a new pitch removal and storage system.



The retractable pitch, designed for large-scale events, will be housed in six underground levels and will feature an underground irrigation system and ultraviolet lighting to maintain the quality of the grass.

The stadium's capacity will also be increased from around 81,000 to 85,000, although the opening match saw just over 66,000 spectators.

Real Madrid played its first home game at the stadium in September, but the current rush to completion after pandemic-related delays is for a May 2024 deadline when [Taylor Swift is scheduled to take the stage](#) as the first artist to perform at the completed stadium.

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