

Cherwell District Council

FAO: Ms L Bell

By email only

21st March 2024

Planning Practice Guidance: Non-statutory consultees

Paragraph 022 Reference ID: 15-022-20140306

Application Reference: 24/00539/F

Site: Land to the east of Stratfield Brake and the west of Oxford Park Railway Station, Oxford Road, Kidlington.

Proposal: Erection of a stadium (Use Class F2) with flexible commercial and community facilities and uses including for conferences, exhibitions, education, and other events, club shop, public restaurant, bar, health and wellbeing facility/clinic, and gym (Use Class E/Sui Generis), hotel (Use Class C1), external concourse/fan-zone, car and cycle parking, access and highway works, utilities, public realm, landscaping and all associated and ancillary works and structures.

Sport England Reference: PA/24/SE/CL/67076

Dear Laura,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Sport England – Non Statutory Role and Policy

The Government, within their Planning Practice Guidance (Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Section) advises Local Planning Authorities to consult Sport England on a wide range of applications. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space#open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities>

This application falls within the scope of the above guidance as it relates to the creation of a major sports facility.

Sport England assesses this type of application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and against its own planning objectives, which are Protect - To protect the right opportunities in the right places; Enhance - To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision; Provide - To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations. Further information on the objectives and Sport England's wider planning guidance can be found on its website:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport>

The Proposal and Assessment against Sport England's Objectives and the NPPF

Sport England has been aware of the need for Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) to find a new home for the past 2 years. The need has been set out in the planning statement.

As part of our assessment, we have consulted with Oxfordshire Football Association/the Football Foundation, (OFA/FF).

The FF are supportive in principle of the proposal as there is a need for the club to have a secure site as soon as possible to fulfill the league requirements. The FF seek clarification of the community benefits from the relocation of OUFC as do the OFA. Indeed, we were informed that the CEO of OFA, Jonthan Duckworth, is still awaiting a reply to his letter dated 11th August 2023 regarding this.

The final matter raised by the FF/OFA, is to remind the OUFC to ensure that all elements of the proposal are compliant with the requirements and recommendations of the Football League and the Sports Grounds Safety Authority.

We would like to echo these points and consider that the Council should ask OUFC to clarify the local community benefits through the relocation of the club from south Oxford to north Oxford and in particular into Kidlington/Cherwell by OUFC.

We met the club and their representatives, on 20th March 2024, and advised them that it would be helpful to share what the community benefits would be. They confirmed that, they would address this in due course.

We also echo the need to ensure compliance with the league requirements and the Sports Ground Safety Authority. We assume the scheme has already been assessed by the National Counter Terrorism Unit.

Summary

As set out above, we are aware of the need for OUFC to have a new site as soon as possible. This application will provide a future for the club and therefore protects its long term future. We consider that it meets our planning objective 1 - *Protect*.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises no objections for this application, as it is considered to meet Objective 1 as set out above.

Given Oxford United Football Club is bound by a number of stringent conditions to ensure the playing pitch meets league requirements, Sport England is not proposing any conditions on the pitch construction, which would normally be the case.

The absence of an objection to this application, in the context of the Town and Country Planning Act, cannot be taken as formal support or consent from Sport England or any National Governing Body of Sport to any related funding application, or as may be required by virtue of any pre-existing funding agreement.

If you would like any further information or advice, please contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

Bob

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cc J Hall Esq. FF
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G Brockbank Esq. Ridge
Cllr N Simpson Esq. CDC
T Darlington Esq. CDC
Ms C Cherry CDC

Annex

The Five Exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy

Exception 1

A robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

Exception 2

The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Exception 3

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.

Exception 4

The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:

- of equivalent or better quality, and
- of equivalent or greater quantity, and
- in a suitable location, and
- subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.

Exception 5

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

The full 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document' is available to view at: www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy