

Planning application 24/00539/F

Response by Cllr Andrew Gant,  
Oxfordshire County Councillor, Wolvercote and Summertown Division  
Oxford City Councillor, Cutteslowe and Summertown ward

## Objection

This response is written in my capacity as local councillor.

I have taken into account and am representing the views of the residents in my division. My response is in my role as a Divisional Councillor. I am not responding on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, who will be a statutory consultee on the application as the Highway Authority. I am a member of the Cabinet at Oxfordshire County Council and if in the future I am required to take any decisions in my Cabinet role connected to the Triangle site I will keep an open mind and consider all of the information that is put before me and listen to any representations at that time before coming to any view.

As Divisional Councillor for Wolvercote and Summertown, the area of North Oxford slightly to the south of the application site, I will confine this response to the impact of the proposed transport and traffic management arrangements on the residents of my division.

I do not believe the travel plan as submitted can be considered acceptable. This response should be read as a formal objection.

First, the proposal to close Oxford Rd (A4260) to cars for at least 30 minutes at the beginning and the end of matches would represent a significant and unacceptable loss of amenity to residents of my division and many others.

Oxford Road is a key and well-used route allowing residents of the Cutteslowe, Five Mile Drive, Summertown and other areas access by vehicle to local amenities such as Sainsbury's, sport and leisure facilities in Kidlington and many others. Removing this amenity cannot be considered acceptable.

The proposed diversion via Frieze Way, Pear Tree and the Wolvercote Roundabout will not in the opinion of residents in my division work. Vehicles will have to negotiate four additional roundabouts (Loop Farm, Pear Tree, Wolvercote and Cutteslowe), all of which are already extremely busy. Significant additional development all around the local area will add to the already heavy use of these roads, in particular the large amount of car-based employment at Oxford North. Having lived in the area for 25 years and used these roads regularly, I have no doubt that closing the main route north out of Oxford and diverting traffic onto these roads will cause unacceptable traffic consequences and cannot be supported by residents.

The routes being proposed for the diversion include roads which are residential in character. In particular, the A40 between the Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts (Sunderland Avenue) has frontages on both sides, some direct onto the road, some set back on access

roads. The A4260 between Cutteslowe roundabout and Parkway station (Banbury Road/Oxford Road) also has residential frontages. Both roads also have residential side roads opening onto them. Five Mile Drive offers a potential "rat-run" through a wide, straight, residential road which already suffers from this kind of behaviour. The impact of this proposal as submitted would clearly result in an unacceptable increase in traffic, congestion and pollution for the residents of these roads.

Provision for active travel around these roads is also minimal. For example, crossing Sunderland Avenue to get to, say, Wolvercote Primary School from the Five Mile Drive area involves long waits at several pedestrian crossings. Current developments including Oxford North have not been required to deliver sufficient mitigation for this. The residents of Barton Park, further down the A40 to the east, are a living example of poor decision-making at the planning stage.

The modelling for the County Council's agreed Traffic Filters scheme already shows a small increase in traffic volumes on Woodstock Road. This is already a concern for residents of my division in the context of a scheme whose entire rationale is to reduce congestion. I am not aware that the potential effects of the closure proposed in this application have been factored into that modelling. The closure cannot be agreed or considered acceptable unless and until that is done.

Nor, of course, is the negative impact of the proposed closure limited to residents of my division. The Sainsbury's superstore is of course used by many people on Saturday afternoons and weekday evenings (which is presumably why it was built on good road links in the first place). Removing the main access from the south would severely compromise that amenity. Perhaps even more importantly, Water Eaton Park and Ride is immediately to the south of the proposed closure. In 2015 Network Rail and Chiltern Railways began services from the new Oxford Parkway station, the first new mainline route between a major provincial town and the capital for generations. As their names suggest, both facilities are purposefully designed to attract patrons to arrive by car and continue their journeys by other means. Both have been a huge success, with passenger numbers continuing to increase significantly (pandemic notwithstanding, of course). Train ridership has also increased at the weekends as a leisure and recreational activity, which is a welcome development. It hardly seems necessary to point out that closing the only road into these facilities immediately north of the single point of access completely undermines the whole point of them being there. They exist to allow residents of North Oxfordshire and further afield to drive to the station and/or the bus. It is simply impossible to block that access and attempt to divert all traffic via the proposed diversion. It would have a huge negative impact not just on local residents but on anyone trying to catch a train or a bus, thus undermining a key objective of County Council policy and placing more pressure on other modes of travel.

There are also, of course, many other facilities and activities which would be negatively impacted by this proposed closure, including the new medical centre at Jordan Hill, sports facilities at Jordan Hill and Five Mile Drive, and the cemetery.

Summertown Stars football club, a flourishing and rapidly growing club, uses Five Mile Drive for its younger teams on Saturday mornings and a large number of pitches in Cutteslowe

park for older age groups up to and including adults on Saturday afternoons, accessed by car via Harbord Road. This proposal seriously damages that amenity.

The proposed closures do not just apply on Saturday afternoons but also to home fixtures on weekday evenings. This brings the closure into the regular rush-hour period. This is not sensible.

Any large-scale application would require the developer to demonstrate mitigation of the transport impact of the plans, either directly or through contributions secured to off-site measures. This application should, indeed must, be treated in exactly the same way. It currently in my opinion makes traffic worse, not better.

“At least” 30 minutes at each end of a match can of course be taken to mean anything in the context of a match day. It is a blank cheque to severely damage the amenity of my residents and others, and it cannot be supported in its current form.

This is not the same as bodies such as the police deciding on an occasional basis that traffic and crowd management measures are required: they already have the authority to do that within the law. This proposal enshrines unlimited closures into the day-to-day operational activities of the stadium.

Second, the plans appear to rely heavily on fans making use of the various Park and Ride sites, but does not, as far as I can see, make a sufficient assessment of Park and Ride capacity. It is worth pointing out that the current stadium, at the Kassam, has a large, free car park which can and does accommodate all attendees who arrive by car. There is therefore currently no, or negligible, impact on Park and Ride capacity from fans attending matches. (And Grenoble Road is not closed to through traffic on match days).

Third, further measures such as residents' parking zones, coach parking, etc need to be agreed and secured as part of the planning application, not reserved to the production of a traffic management plan at a later date.

Andrew Gant  
9 April 2024