

# Comment for planning application 24/00539/F

**Application Number**

**Location**

**Proposal**

**Case Officer**

**Organisation Name**

**Address**

**Type of Comment**

**Type**

**Comments**

Oxford United is a special football club. It has made a huge difference to my life personally, but many of my family, friends and colleagues too. I support people with disabilities and mental health issues, something I have my own personal experience of. The difference Oxford United makes to their lives cannot be overstated. There is often frustration and disappointment when results don't go our way, but the banter and the joy that supporting Oxford United brings, is very special. The current stadium is difficult to get to for those that are unable to drive, and it means that people that would love to go more are unable to. The stadium itself has poor facilities. No warm water in the toilet taps. Poorly maintained areas that supporters use, and a disabled area that isn't ideal and is limited due to space.

I recently did some travel training with a gentleman that has followed Oxford United for 40 years, as was too anxious to go back to matches after covid. The first time we traveled on the bus together to the stadium, his excitement levels were clear to see. As we walked to the stadium and he saw it person for the first time In 3 years, the smile and look of joy is something I will never forget. It reminded me just how much our football club means to people in our community. Unfortunately, the gentleman has stopped coming to matches again as he finds it difficult to get the bus that takes so long, with a 10 minute walk from Blackbird Leys that follows. This isn't an isolated case. I speak regularly to people who find it difficult to get to the ground. This means they become more isolated and lonely. It breaks my heart as I know the difference it makes when they come to watch Oxford United. They feel part of a community that cares and is together. That is the power of Oxford United Football Club. A new stadium with the travel links and facilities proposed would make a huge difference to peoples lives. It would open a world of possibilities and opportunities for those currently restricted by issues faced with the current stadium. When I talk to some of our fans that are affected, the hope that a new stadium that is easily accessible to all could happen is real, and it is giving them something to look forward to. There would be so many more people currently facing loneliness and travel issues the chance to regularly be part of our community. A community that could come together 7 days a week if this does go ahead.

Personally, I struggle with anxiety and find the current stadium very unwelcoming and it can become overwhelming when simple things like warm water in toilet taps, or filthy toilets that are poorly maintained which sometimes means I avoid going and that leads to additional issues. I am so excited by the prospect of a community stadium that caters for the needs of our fanbase. It would make such a difference to me. I find the drive quite difficult if it's busy. I would get the train to every game from Didcot if this happens. The amount of stress the new stadium would relieve for me is indescribable.

I have 2 wonderful children. 2 boys that are only here because I met their mother through Oxford United. They are 13 and 7, and love Oxford United. Sadly I don't live with them any more. Time with them is precious, so when we get to go to watch Oxford United together, it is special. My dad first took me 34 years ago, so for me to take my children now, it's a huge honour. Unfortunately due to anxiety I am not always able to take them. We go in the family