

Comment for planning application 24/00539/F

Application Number

Location

Proposal

Case Officer

Organisation Name

Address

Type of Comment

Type

Comments

- Green Belt development against the Local Plan. Allowing building on this land goes against the Cherwell Local Plan. The Local Plan kept the site as Green Belt land. If commercial enterprises are allowed to come along and disregard the Local Plan this is anti-democratic. The Local Plan process is one that local people engage in in good faith and local communities should expect development decisions to be made in line with this.

- Environmental destruction. Allowing major construction on Green Belt land is not consistent with the direction of policy pursued by the Council, which has sought to address climate change. If the club stayed at its current site (ie no new construction) this would be the best option for the environment no matter what BREEAM rating is achieved. The triangle site is included in the proposed Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire by Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre. Moreover, Cherwell District Council's own Ecology Officer said that "The very high level of public use of the site which will occur at certain times will necessitate some areas to be retained and managed solely for biodiversity to ensure habitats can function" but this has not been addressed in the planning application. Allowing this development to go ahead would be hugely hypocritical and would surely leave residents questioning how sincerely councillors really take environmental protection, or whether there are vested interests at work in this case.

- Oxford United is not being honest about its reasons for pursuing the development instead of staying put. It has become clear from information that has come to light in the last year that it does not, in fact, need to leave its current stadium site by 2026, but it has chosen not to seek to extend its lease. I understand the club may have business reasons for making this decision but these do not justify trying to build on Green Belt land. The National Planning Policy Framework allows inappropriate development (which Oxford United has acknowledged that this would be) only in very special circumstances but one of the club's key justifications is not valid - the claim that the club cannot extend its lease should be challenged. Further, the Alternative Sites report was prepared only after the lease had been prepared (and wrongly states that the club cannot stay at its current site), so I don't believe this was conducted impartially. The majority of Oxford United fans are based in east Oxford so why has there been no green belt site identified there? This would make walking and cycling most likely. The Council seems to be acting in the club's commercial interests rather than for local residents and many of us are wondering why this should be the case.

- Parking. The application does not include nearly enough parking spaces to accommodate all of the fans likely to turn up to matches and other events. The application does not include an adequate plan for preventing the majority of home or away fans travelling by car and seeking to park within walking distance to the site. With 81% of supporters currently travelling by car this will be the norm in the future and the application does not include an effective strategy for achieving the pie-in-the-sky aim of having 90% of fans travelling sustainably. This will have knock-on effects for local residents, such as filling up the park & ride car parks, nearby car parks such as at Cutteslowe Park, which are already full much of