

Very Special Circumstances cited are disingenuous

28. OUFC says that it has to find a new place to play after 2026. However it is now clear that the club made itself homeless and hasn't tried to negotiate to stay at the Kassam Stadium. This is a modern facility comparable with or better than many similar clubs. The owner of the Kassam Stadium has publicly stated that the club can continue to play at the ground. This position should be confirmed by the Council and OUFC's claim not accepted.
29. The importance of the Kassam Stadium as a football stadium was recognised by its designation by the City Council as an Asset of Community Value. This was in 2012, by a vote of 10-5 in 2012. Nevertheless the City Council's [REDACTED] stadium should remain .
30. Recently OUFC, rather than stressing its claimed 'homelessness' from 2026, has focused on claimed benefits, including increased revenue, arising from owning its own stadium. However this is not guaranteed nor is ownership of the hotel and other commercial uses. According to its own accounts the club's liabilities exceed its assets by over £20m. Funding for the stadium – probably well in excess of £150million - would therefore have to be forthcoming from external investors who will only do so if there is a financial return. So 'increased revenue' is likely to go to investors rather than the club. There is also absolutely no guarantee that the club would continue to own the stadium. Football clubs are regularly bought and sold and different owners may have very different plans.
31. There are no 'very special circumstances' to justify the construction of a 180 bed hotel.
32. The club claims there will be environmental benefits to a new stadium. However demolishing an existing stadium to replace it with a new one (including an unnecessary hotel) does not represent sustainable development, especially given the huge amount of carbon generated simply through the building process. It would surely be less expensive and much more sustainable to improve the existing stadium.
33. The club also claims economic benefits such as new jobs. However, Kidlington has almost full employment. Jobs would presumably be lost in the south of the City, an area which, arguably, is in more need of employment opportunities.
34. Claims that the site will increase biodiversity and access to the Green Belt defy common sense. The development would be likely to diminish biodiversity both on and around the site and will effectively destroy the Green Belt.
35. Claimed environmental, economic, biodiversity and access 'benefits', even if they were real, would not represent very special circumstances.