

<u>24/00539/F</u>	Land To The East Of Stratfield Brake And West Of Oxford Parkway Railway Station Oxford Road Kidlington	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
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I write to lodge my strongest objections to the above application on the following grounds:-

Alternative sites

The application document contains a very superficial assessment of alternative sites, and fails to consider at all options to request Oxford City Council to Compulsorily purchase the site, as permitted in Alliance Spring co and others v The First Secretary of State 2005 EWHC (Arsenal Stadium).

Community engagement

I am most disappointed that there is no reference to Kidlington residents in the community involvement exercises – the suggestion that the community is broadly supportive of the proposed relocation does not reflect the position of many Kidlington residents, who see that this is yet another instance of Oxford city imposing unwanted development on the area (similar to the “Oxford city unmet housing needs”). My impression reading the documents is that the consultation exercise carried out is highly biased as significant part of it is by surveying fans of the club, who would no doubt support the proposals, but many of whom are not expected to live with the consequences. I note that the only Kidlington resident quoted is a Liam Walker who is clearly a club supporter – and there is no reflection of the opinions of residents who are not supporters of the club and have real concerns about the development.

I also note several meetings with Liz Leaman (OCC) about the need to involve Wolvercote and North Oxford, but no discussion with Kidlington and, most particularly, villages to the north of Kidlington, for whom the A 4260 is a main thoroughfare into and out of Oxford.

It is disappointing that the statement refers to “ Opposition from a small number of stakeholders who were concerned about the impact of the development on the green belt and the worries about increased traffic and parking in Kidlington.” When there has been little concerted attempt to consult with stakeholders who do not support the proposed development.

Economic benefits statement

While much publicity has been made of the economics of moving the club there is little information as to how a development some 1.5 miles from the centre of Kidlington will strengthen Kidlington’s centre.

Furthermore references to the Kidlington masterplan are significantly out of date – and fail to recognise that there has recently been a significant increase in the number of tourist beds in the area. A further hotel on this site is now no longer necessary in planning terms, with the recent development of the Premier Inn opposite London Oxford airport, and an Easyhotel in Summertown.

The proposed development will offer a broad range of jobs at a range of salary levels. – not everyone can be footballers – what other jobs will the development bring that will support those with higher

qualifications? From the document jobs to be created will mainly be low level jobs perpetuating the comments made about the current employment in the Local Impact area. Many of these jobs will be in occupations that are currently proving hard to fill.

Furthermore, the development will require a significant number of construction jobs – currently there is a severe shortage of companies able to carry out construction work with a general shortage of the specialist trades used – where will the developers find the skilled labour they require (210 FTEs) +?

Community Benefits

The application contains bald assertions with no evidence to show exactly how the development will deliver against local policies, and it must be remembered that Oxford United already have a stadium operating in South Oxford, with, presumably, some of the roles currently filled.

The Planning application contains no firm commitments to deliver community benefits – just “use best endeavours” and “aspiration”. There will be no opportunity for Kidlington groups to use the playing field as the only pitch likely to be available for community use is the “Training Ground (which will remain at Horspath Road). Many of OUFCs community outreach programmes will continue to be run from there, especially those for East Oxford. – the main community benefit will remain in East Oxford as detailed in the OUitC Key Activities list.

If, as stated “ a large proportion of OUFC supporters live in Lillemore and Cowley” clearly the club should be doing everything within their power to retain their current site in the south-east of Oxford city.

Highway Issues

My major concern with this application are the current proposals to close the Banbury to Oxford road, currently suggested as before and after matches, but which could probably expand to any other major events held at the stadium. To do this would effectively keep the residents of Kidlington and villages to the north captive during events, and would also cause problems for the South Central Ambulance base on Langford Lane and the Fire Services HQ in Sterling Road. While an alternative route into Oxford is available, this would certainly not be the case if a road closure on the Banbury Road coincided with a popular event at Blenheim Palace.

Conclusion

I am opposed to this application in its entirety as I believe it will bring no real benefit to Cherwell District as a whole, and generate a significant disruption to residents with traffic disruption, antisocial behaviour of fans and parking issues in residential roads.

