

# Comment for planning application 24/00539/F

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| <b>Application Number</b> | 24/00539/F  |
| <b>Location</b>           | Land To The East Of Stratfield Brake And West Of Oxford Parkway Railway Station Oxford Road Kidlington  |
| <b>Proposal</b>           | 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   |
| <b>Case Officer</b>       | Laura Bell  |
| <b>Organisation Name</b>  |   |
| <b>Address</b>            |   |
| <b>Type of Comment</b>    | Support   |
| <b>Type</b>               | neighbour   |
| <b>Comments</b>           | <p>Re. Planning Application 24/00539/F Land to the East of Stratfield Brake and West of Oxford Parkway Railway Station, Oxford Road, Kidlington.</p> <p>Please find my submission in support of this application.</p> <p>I have lived in Oxfordshire my whole life and have been an Oxford United supporter for most of this time having first attended a game in 1983. I was taken to my first game by my father and attended many others with my auntie and wider family. I have since taken my own children to watch games and hope that in time they will continue this tradition by taking their families too.</p> <p>Oxford United is a true family club at the centre of our county and our community. I have been supporting the club as a matchday volunteer this season and have met hundreds of young families attending their first games, as well as more elderly supporters who have been following the club since the Headington United years. I have also seen how the club is a safe and welcoming environment for supporters from all backgrounds, all ethnic, cultural and international groups, those with visible and non-visible disabilities, those who have mental health and neurodiversity needs, the introduction of the Proud Yellows to support the LGBT+ communities, as well as the continued growth of the womens and girls teams. Oxford United is a truly diverse and inclusive centre for our community to come together, and their very future is at stake within this application to find a new home. Whilst this is important to me and thousands of others, I respect that the planning application must meet certain conditions in order to be granted and would like to address some of the key points.</p> <p>Travel and Access to the Stadium</p> <p>I currently live in Bicester and as a result of the disjointed and frequently inadequate public transport system, I find myself driving to games and parking in allocated spaces on the Grenoble Road. On a Saturday I will leave my house at 12pm and rarely get home before 6pm. This is a long day for my children and is often made worse by any adverse weather conditions in a football stadium barely fit for purpose.</p> <p>The proposed new stadium is situated across the road from an existing public transport hub which I will use to attend. The train from Bicester takes 5 minutes, on 10 minutes on the bus. This will make travel significantly easier and allow for greater flexibility to arrive later to use the associated facilities before or after a game if I choose. It will also mean that I will not be using my car, and all the surveys conducted by the football club indicates that thousands of others will also use public transport. Collectively this will reduce unnecessary car journeys, reduce traffic, and improve the air quality - everything that we would all want. The reduced dependency on car usage will also allay fears regarding parking in and around Kidlington, especially with shuttle services provided from the under used park and ride sites around the county. We will also see increased provisions for public transport. Chiltern Railways operate the line which services Wembley Stadium and rail stock is frequently added to meet demand for big events. Equally additional carriages are already added to the same trains on the same line to meet peak demand for Bicester Village. It makes simple economic</p> |

sense for bus and train providers to capitalise on increased demand.

As for access to the stadium, I have been to sporting events all over the world, many with significantly greater capacity than this proposed stadium, and all with worse public transport links. All have a variety of traffic management plans in place that effectively manage movement of tens of thousands of people in and out with minimal disruption. Whether this is through designated road crossings, temporary road diversions or the use of a bridge or underpass, the results are the same and thousands of people can safely enter and exit much bigger venues without issue.

### Green Belt Special Circumstances

I have a young family and the environment is very important to me. I want to see progress and development, but I also want to see publicly accessible green spaces preserved and protected.

But the site, known as the Triangle, has no public access and is situated between major roads. It was previously used as a motorcross track and was recently described as "contaminated scrubland" by a local environmental lobby group. Prior to this application, few would have even known that this land existed or given it a second thought.

The stadium proposal will not damage this site but bring it to life. All developments are legally bound to increase biodiversity and the football club is aiming to go beyond the minimum requirements, not because they must but because they want to. Ancient woodland around the site will remain protected, as will natural habitats through the introduction of biodiverse roof spaces and nature corridors throughout the site. Nature has a fantastic way of adapting and will flourish in the unique environment, and this will become publicly accessible for generations to enjoy as intended rather than being hidden behind fences.

Also, the stadium will be the first all-electric stadium in the country and will be at the forefront of environmental technology. It will embrace solar paneling; water harvesting and will achieve net zero specifications. This will be a stadium that is the benchmark for ecological development for the future.

### Economic and Social Development

There have been numerous studies that show that a new football stadium not only leads to improved success on the pitch but also increase local economies and enhances social cohesion and community development. Football generates hundreds of million pounds of revenue throughout the country, both directly and indirectly across the wide area. There will also be an increase in employment opportunities, and whilst unemployment is not a huge issue locally, there are many people who have struggled throughout the recent cost of living crisis. Matchday work will be evenings and weekends and will therefore support those who require flexible working conditions to work around childcare, or those in fulltime education. There are also those who, like me, will gain a huge satisfaction from doing voluntary roles around the football club. There will also be other full time employment opportunities directly linked to the football stadium and associated businesses, but also an increase in employment throughout the wider community for businesses that develop of the back of the increased footfall through the area.

There will also be educational and training opportunities provided plus additional community links. Oxford United has already committed to supporting local projects that reach out in to the community through Oxford United in the Community, and the new stadium will provide an opportunity to do so much more. And football provides an avenue for people of all social economic and diverse backgrounds to come together and Stand United. This provides an opportunity to support mental and physical wellbeing and to provide support in a way that is hard to replicate elsewhere.

### Summary

Oxford United will become homeless in the summer of 2026. The license to play at the Kassam Stadium runs out at the end of June 2026, and there is not right to extend. Mr Kassam has shown evidenced that the current site is open for immediate development now and the rest from late 2026 which further proves that Oxford United will have no where to play football in 2 years. The club have searched throughout Oxford to find a suitable site and the only other suitable site was at Stratfield Brake next to the Triangle, but OCC were unable to relinquish their lease to use this site and the Triangle became the only suitable alternative. This is also established facts despite some looking to muddy the waters. Without a stadium to play in there is no football club and a 130-year-old institution that brings joy to tens of thousands of people every week will die. The football club that supports youth development throughout the county, has embraced girls and women's football and made it accessible to all, that has supported a Down Syndrome team and reaches out to other disability groups, that has a Walking football team for more mature players, that touches the lives of so many people through football or beyond, all of this will

be gone.

Oxford United has been part of my life for over 40 years and has been there for me through some incredible times and also some very difficult periods in my life. The very future of this fantastic club is at risk, and I urge the Planning Committee to support this application to enable to football club to not only survive but to grow and thrive alongside the local community.

**Received Date**

21/04/2024 15:17:58

**Attachments**