

From [REDACTED]

Re Planning Application 24/00539/F Land To The East Of Stratfield Brake And West Of Oxford Parkway Railway Station Oxford Road Kidlington

I am writing to **support** this application.

I was born and raised in Oxford and now live in South Oxfordshire. My parents still live in Kidlington and have responded in support of the planning application. I have been supporting Oxford United since I was a teenager. This success of this application is essential for the future of Oxford United.

There are personal reasons for me to support this application: my greatest friendships are with fellow football supporters as we share our love of the sport and club; it provides the only social interaction that my disabled spouse can effectively engage in. However, I accept that these reasons are not sufficient for granting planning permission, and so detail below some of the reasons I feel planning permission should be granted.

Green Belt Development

Very special circumstances are needed to develop green belt land. I believe Oxford United has demonstrated these circumstances, and I support the development of this section of green belt because:

- It is clear that OUFC need to leave the Kassam Stadium. Oxfordshire County Council has seen the relevant documents that assure them that there is no right of renewal on the current site. Claims that the landlord, Firoka, is open to negotiation have not been substantiated. In their response to the City Council's 2040 Local Plan consultation, Firoka states the site is available for development, "half of the site is immediately available with the other half of the site to be released with the planned relocation of Oxford United Football Club to North Oxford by 2026". This does not indicate any intention to negotiate a long-term licence.
- A thorough study of potential sites was undertaken by the club. Whilst loss of green belt should not be taken lightly, this small triangle of land should be considered in context. Previously used as a motocross track and described as "within an area of potentially contaminated land", it is bounded by Oxford Road and Frieze Way and has the A34 in close proximity. The plans make good provision for enhancing biodiversity, protecting the woodland to the south of the site, and making the northern section a green space accessible to the local community.
- Without a stadium there is no football club. Football is incredibly important to thousands of people in Oxfordshire. It brings together people of all ages and creates a community that crosses age and class barriers. It provides economic and social benefits, the loss of which have serious adverse effects on the communities as summarised in Figure 1 of the DCMS White Paper "A sustainable future - reforming club football governance" published in 2023 (available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63f65d3de90e077bb0c92853/Reform_of_club_football_governance_-_White_Paper.pdf).

Cherwell Local Plan

Oxford United's application demonstrates a number of benefits that are in line with Cherwell's current Local Plan objectives, including:

- "Developing a sustainable economy"
Current residents and those in the new housing planned for the area will have local job opportunities at the stadium, health facility and hotel.
- Ensuring "people have convenient access to health, education, open space, sport and recreational activities when they need ... address inequalities in health, and aim to maximise well-being. Poverty and social exclusion will be reduced"
The "dreaming spires" project and OUFC's commitment to maintenance and improvement of the current pitches at Stratfield Brake as well as the presence of elite sport specialists and work by Oxford United in the Community will contribute to this objective.
- "We will protect our natural resources, embracing environmental technologies and adapting our behaviour to meet the global challenge of climate change"
Proximity to Oxford Parkway will reduce the number of road journeys to the stadium. Brighton and Hove Albion have shown that habits can change when realistic alternatives are available.
The first all-electric stadium, with solar panels, rainwater harvesting and built to net-zero specifications will demonstrate a real intention to embrace the best new technologies.

Travel

There are understandable concerns regarding the impact of traffic, which will inevitably increase around match times. There should be an acceptable travel plan in place before the stadium is used. This should be based on expert advice, not political whim or hyperbolic speculation. I make the following observations:

- Road closures are employed effectively at many football clubs around the country – if the traffic officers and safety advice group deem this the most effective way to minimise disruption to Oxford Road and ensure everyone's safety, their advice should be taken.
- Football matches almost exclusively take place outside of peak commuter times.
- A Controlled Parking Zone is already in place on weekdays, running from the proposed site northbound towards Kidlington along the Oxford Road as far as Bicester Road. Therefore a matchday CPZ would not be the dramatic and unacceptable change that some have suggested.

I believe the club has demonstrated these and many other benefits in the planning application, and has suggested sensible mitigation factors for the disruption to the flora and fauna on the site. I urge you to grant this application.