

No document has addressed the question as to how such spectators cross the bridge that crosses the railway and the A34. The pavements on either side are far too narrow to accommodate crowds, and there is no means to widen them without encroaching onto the current highway. Worse still, it must surely be dangerous to expect crowds to use just those pavements when there is a significant traffic on the road.

The Planning Authority should therefore demand that this issue be addressed before there is further consideration. Whether the solution is a new dedicated footbridge that crosses the railway and the A34, or a tunnel that goes under both of these and the A4165, is not my concern, although having written this it now becomes transparent that the tunnel also solves the road closure question.

The Football Case, OR NOT

Many submissions in favour of the proposed stadium come from those living far from Oxford and with no knowledge of the detailed issues involved, whether that of encroachment on the Green Belt or local traffic-related issues. One can see why, on general grounds of support for

I will not engage in aspects of the relationship between OUFC and Mr Kassam over the past five years that have seen OUFC running out of its licence since it would be dependent on the research conducted by others, and which no doubt they will present. I shall go further back to previous incarnations of attempts to "put OUFC on a sounder footing".

I start with the legendary Robert Maxwell. Was he not the saviour who would develop the club, with the added benefit of being "local"? For a while, maybe, but remember that he sold the club for 1 when the broader enterprise became insolvent.

Later there was Mr Kassam himself. But a search of Companies House records show that he was in fact a director for only seven years, from 1999-2006. I refer the Planning Authority to

<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/00470509/officers>

for a complete record of the turnover of directors in order that it may form an impression of the stability behind such enterprises - no doubt, this will come as a shock to many of those who have written letters of support from a distance.

More difficult to dissect, however, is the proposed relationship between OUFC as a club, and what will essentially be a property company with substantial long-term liabilities arising from loans taken to build this stadium. If the model is in any sense like that established at the time either of Robert Maxwell's or Mr Kassam's acquisitions of the Club, then the Planning Authority needs to take note.

It may not be a planning matter, but since the grant of a lease by the County Council is dependent on the granting of planning permission, the ultimate responsibility of the Cherwell District Council becomes clear. Unless there is a very clear indication otherwise, then there is a risk that the grant of planning permission benefits only an underlying property company and not the Football Club. How that will play out may be hard to discern, but the current situation with the Kassam Stadium should act as a clear warning of easily an initially enthusiastic owner can discard that interest unless there is a built-in protection for the Club from the outset. And the relevant information is notable for its absence.

The Planning Authority must accept responsibility, not merely for the immediate needs of OUFC, but for the heritage that this development may leave.

Received Date

22/04/2024 22:47:53

Attachments