

OUFC Proposed Stadium. Application no.24/00539/F

Dear Planning Team,

I OBJECT to the application on the following grounds.

LOCAL PLAN: The site is not an allocated development site.

ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE: Planning policies promote caring for the planet by, in part, reducing our carbon footprint. The NPPF promotes low carbon construction and materials and gives significant weight to the regeneration of existing sites. Biodiversity, conservation and enhancement underpin much of national and local authorities planning policies including those of Cherwell District Council. The environmental cost of the proposed large construction footprint and the loss of embodied energy with the subsequent demolition of the Grenoble Road stadium contradict policy at national and local level. There is no evidence in the application that the stadium will be built with low carbon materials and the application fails to recognize the significance of climate change.

The maintenance of natural habitat supports policies to secure the future of the planet. The ecological survey states that the site is of significant natural habitat value and that any change in land use and other disturbances such as light pollution would adversely impact on the natural habitat. This development will destroy the surrounding environment and biodiversity. The applicant's aims to achieve a high level of "sustainability" and a 10% enhancement of biodiversity is unrealistic on this cramped site and ignores the contradiction of leaving the present stadium and building on virgin land. The site is subject to flooding and development would disrupt this natural occurrence and potentially bring harm to surrounding areas. Furthermore the potential harm to the habitat and nearby trees from construction runoff is significant. This suggests that the site is unsuitable for any development but particularly this large commercial and sporting use.

The application is not only for a 16,000 seater stadium but a hotel and other commercial uses. The comings and goings, number of cars and the associated service vehicles required to support the development will bring unacceptable levels of disruption, disturbance and pollution to the local environment and to nearby residents. At times lighting will be needed in the stadium which will bring unacceptable levels of electric light pollution to the area resulting in harm to wild life and to the lives of people living nearby.

GREEN BELT: the Green Belt, inter alia, is to provide biodiversity, prevent urban sprawl, merging of settlements and to preserve the setting of historic towns. This development will not comply with the intentions of the Green Belt. The case for "very special circumstances" is not persuasive. The harm that the development will bring far outweighs any benefit the development may bring to the local community or to the global brand of the university city.

LANDSCAPE: The height and scale of this proposal has a harmful impact on the landscape setting and the appearance of the rural character of the gap between the settlements of Oxford and Kidlington. The access to the stadium has serious visual and landscape impact which seems to have been ignored and in itself surely must lead to the conclusion that this site is unsuitable for such a large commercial venture and should be refused permission.

SAFETY: Development will bring public access to a site which currently has none. The proposal raises huge concerns about the health and safety of crowds moving about on match and event days in conflict with traffic. The solutions proposed are entirely inadequate and do not avoid those who will always take their own preferred routes. The site plan appears to show that the vehicular access is very close to the pedestrian crossing of Frieze Way. This will not only bring life threatening hazards but will exacerbate vehicular congestion in the vicinity creating further tail-back problems. There are four major highways involved around the site. Closing roads for the convenience of a private commercial venture is unacceptable. A bridge is proposed between the Parkway Station and stadium site but is not part of the application so a crucial element of the proposal is missing and its design cannot be assessed as part of the planning process. Its absence is unacceptable and the application is flawed. Nevertheless a bridge alone connecting one arrival point to the

stadium will not resolve the issues arising from a large number of people, possibly 16,000 and more on event days, trying to access an island site which is bounded by four major highways. The site is unsuitable for such a user where there is huge potential for accidents and presents huge obstacles for the health and safety of visitors. The application suggests that there will be a high proportion of fans arriving at the station and adjacent park and ride for which a substantial bridge structure will be required. Such a solution will always give cause for concern as hazards are likely to arise on a restricted route where people move at different speeds and patience and tolerance are often sorely tested. Safe access to a stadium here could be made but an above-ground ring connecting all pedestrian and cycle routes from the surroundings, allowing people to safely cross the highways to the site would have significant harmful impact upon the green belt and is beyond the imagination of the applicant and certainly beyond the financial reach of the Club and would be unlikely to gain support from the County Council or receive funding from the County Highways budget.

TRAFFIC: The applicant suggests that road diversions/closures will be an acceptable solution on match days. This entirely selfish proposal driven by self-promotion of a football club and private commercial venture which gives no consideration to the lives of people who have other interests and rely upon the connectivity that the noted roads provide. Diversions and closures in the immediate vicinity are likely to cause back-up and huge disruption on the A34 and A44 and consequently on other roads surrounding Oxford already at capacity. This proposal has been strongly criticised by Thames Valley Police who also have serious concerns about safety on general circulation of people which has led them to conclude that the application should be refused. Furthermore there is no evidence that fans will change a habit of a lifetime of car use to buses or some form of active travel. This will bring further challenges to local roads and parking spaces in residential streets. Cycle Route 51 has not been developed from Oxford to Parkway, Kidlington and beyond. It is unrealistic to believe that a significant number of fans will cycle to matches or events. Limited parking may be available on the station public car park but match days frequently coincide with Saturday shoppers parking. Elsewhere walking will be limited from wherever buses park and cars can park. This is not a proper transport policy. The plans show significant alterations to the roads for access to the site. It is unclear who will pay for this and the County Council have made no statement go the effect that the cost will not be covered from the public purse.

DESIGN: Whilst, for the above reasons alone this is not the right place for a stadium, its design demonstrates the difficulties in producing an appropriate building of this scale on a site too small for its stated uses, on a very sensitive site at the entrance to a world-renowned University city. Is this project a stadium hotel or a hotel stadium? It demonstrates that the club, like many others would never just need a stadium but require the financial subsidy from other uses. The complex nature of uses and their servicing have resulted in a cramped development on a site that is inadequate in size to support it. Examples of such mixed-use developments, such as the Hilton/ Milton Keynes, Holiday Inn/ Norwich and Blackpool or Bolton are far from exemplary architectural masterpieces and certainly unwelcome on this green belt location. They do however illustrate the unsatisfactory outcomes when priorities, rather than those which inform good design such as safety, biodiversity, visual appropriateness, variety, pleasing composition, sustainable use of materials, articulation of architectural elements and distinctiveness, are allowed to determine the appearance of a building. Here we have a building which is neither one thing or another. The compromise, determined by cost, budget hotel standards and a site with an area too small to accommodate a range of uses to suit everyone including a 16,000 seater stadium, a hotel, a conference centre, community facilities and so on, has resulted in a building of poor appearance, one which ignores its context and fails to reflect "the beautiful game", or creating a building which should present an appealing and welcoming appearance plus a distinctive memorable stay when visiting Oxford rather than a standard approach commonly found anywhere with a commercial hotelier - response to accommodation. Whilst the internal arrangements of rooms are probably of less significance in the application, it is worth noting that the corridors are long and have no relief with windows and views to the outside world. This is again contrary to good design practice and results in a poor environment for paying guests. Escape routes, which seem to be inadequate in number, could be used to animate the facades. The lack of variety in size and type of room leads one to conclude that this is a budget hotel. It's a pity that this has informed such a boring façade.

COMMUNITY and ECONOMY: The club's ambi•on for educa•on and an innova•on would be true wherever a stadium was built with easy access to the popula•on of Oxford. The club has substan•al •es with the local community in south Oxford. It is di•cult to quan•fy the social and economic disrup•on that the move to the proposed site would have. It is scarcely credible to believe the proposals for new jobs when the club is proposing to abandon the work force in and local economy of south Oxford and the opportuni•es which exist in that area for further opportuni•es. The residents of Blackbird Leys must be very anxious at the prospect of losing the club and must be hoping that some resolu•on will be found to enable the club to remain at Grenoble Road.

I urge you to REFUSE this applica•on

