

Comment for planning application 23/02276/SCOP

Application Number	23/02276/SCOP
Location	Stratfield Brake Motorcycle Track Oxford Road Kidlington
Proposal	Scoping opinion - new stadium development
Case Officer	Laura Bell

Organisation Name	Steve Gerrish
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Address	18 Croft Avenue, Kidlington, OX5 2HU
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Type of Comment	Objection
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Type	neighbour
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Comments

1. Paragraph 3.4 of the scoping report says that the construction will be between 16 and 25 metres high. For perspective, a typical two storey dwelling house is 5 metres from ground to eaves (the gutter line). Therefore the building will be a minimum of 6 storeys high at all points. It will put the eastern boundary in the shade for half the day, severely effecting any biodiversity that is allowed to remain there (currently a strip of trees and shrubs up to 15 metres wide). As it is, the OUFC graphics so far show that this strip will be removed and replanted with evenly spaced urban trees, albeit native species, and 'tidied up' - tidying up all the biodiversity in the process.

2. The company contracted to provide ecology and biodiversity input for this scoping opinion is Ecology Solutions. Ecology Solutions has significantly downplayed the biodiversity value of the site, and contradicts the emerging picture of the relatively species-rich nature of the willow short rotation coppice that is currently on the site, which has been there for 19 years. Ecology Solutions presents itself on its website as a service to developers " negotiating extensively with local planning authorities, governmental departments and non-governmental organisations". They are there to push the boundaries of the legislation. If they did not do this, they would not get repeat business from the industry. They have a huge conflict of interest if they spot something that might prevent the development from going ahead or increase the cost of off-setting biodiversity loss. (They will surely have to off-set their 10% biodiversity net gain by creating new biodiversity off site.)

I think it is scandalous that development companies are allowed to choose who to do the biodiversity work and be their paymasters. The conflict of interest is very obvious and would put an honest company in an impossible position. It should be for the local authority to commission and pay for the work, and pass the costs on to the developer, then the conflict of interest would (mostly) go away and you, the councillors and officers, would get impartial information on which to base your decisions. This is why we, the electorate, feel so powerless in the face of big money and the privilege it is afforded in our system. (A privilege that they constantly lobby politicians for.)

3. You know as well as I do (I hope) that to demolish a building that was only finished 22 years ago and build a new one is unsustainable. The energy and carbon emissions invested in the steel and concrete of the existing building is completely lost, and new emissions must be released for the steel and concrete in the new building. These 'embodied' carbon emissions are not insignificant compared to the life-time operations emissions of a building. The declared climate and biodiversity emergencies are EMERGENCIES. It has to stop. If Oxfordshire County Council (councillors and officers) fail to grasp this golden opportunity to finally begin stopping this environmental destruction (by refusing to release the land), then that golden opportunity passes to you.

4. Once the owner of the Kassam stadium realises that houses cannot be built on that land, he will have no choice but come to a mutual agreement with OUFC to protect the income stream. My suspicion is that the 'push' for this whole problem is the long term prospect of making a lot of money from house-building on the Kassam stadium site, and there is also a 'pull' from big money in Indonesia wanting to make money from a new stadium complex. The only concern this money has for Kidlington is what they will be forced to have.

Therefore legally binding agreements will be very skilfully negotiated to minimise the liability, and then those agreements will have to be enforced in perpetuity. (By who, and with what powers?) The 'money' does not care, and cannot afford to care about climate and biodiversity. It is for you to make sure it does, on behalf of your electorate, and in solidarity with everyone else doing what they can in the face of these emergencies.

5. The entry on the Cherwell online planning register shows the 'Location' of the Triangle as "Stratfield Brake Motorcycle Track Oxford Road Kidlington" which is potentially misleading. I think the reason for this is that an application was made in November 1997 for change of use from agricultural to motorcycle track, and the plot did not previously exist on the register. A postal address would normally be entered, and as there wasn't one, some unique descriptors had to be entered. In hindsight it would have been better to record its agricultural field number, which is the National Grid reference for the (official) middle of the field. So the 'in-hindsight', and neutral, description of the location would be National Grid Field No SP 4912 8403, Oxford Road, Kidlington). Just a suggestion.

6. As you can see, I am quite cross about this. If you have been, thank you for reading.

Received Date

13/09/2023 18:21:09

Attachments