

Cllr Ian Middleton – Kidlington East Ward

Response to Scoping Application 23/02276/SCOP

I am of the opinion that a full and in depth EIA should be a requirement at the very least, especially as CDC has insisted on this for all adjacent development sites released from green belt as part of the Local Plan Partial Review.

All these sites were primarily housing developments which were justified by the supposed unmet needs of the city council. As such it is arguable that those needs are of a high priority. This application in contrast is primarily an economic development by a private enterprise and so I see no reason why a similar approach should not be taken with CDC insisting on the production of a full EIA including longitudinal studies of wildlife impacts and biodiversity baselines throughout at least one year.

My following comments should be read with the above in mind. Each section refers to paragraphs within the scoping opinion report document.

2. Site description

The title of the application refers to the site as 'Stratfield Brake Motorcycle Track'. This site has not operated as such for nearly 23 years so this sets a very poor contextual baseline for the proposal. The title is extremely misleading and I can only speculate on the reasons for taking this approach. I suspect it's because it suggests a rather different character to the site than the willow farm that it has operated as for the past several years. I understand that in the intervening period before that it was variously a woodland charcoal production site as well as unimproved wild space.

I would suggest that the applicant refrains from such misleading descriptions of the site going forwards if CDC is to take seriously their intentions to provide a genuine picture of what is proposed.

Para 2.1 Describes the site as 'inaccessible scrub'. This is again a rather pejorative description. The site has been assessed by an environmental group and a local qualified ecologist and I can provide specific reports. The lack of accessibility to the site is actually a positive point in this case as reduced human activity on the site has enabled a degree of self rewilding to occur which provides undisturbed habitat for a variety of species.

Para 2.5 claims that the site is not adjacent to an environmentally sensitive area. This seems to exclude both the woodland boundary to the south and the Woodland Trust conservation area on the other side of Frieze Way which is likely to be affected by both the noise and light pollution emanating from the proposed development.

Para 2.6 Makes reference to the site being "washed over by the Oxfordshire Green Belt". This seems like a rather odd term to use. The site is within the green belt and was maintained as such as part of the CDC local plan and the subsequent partial review. It is thus protected from development except where exceptional circumstances can be shown. That fact alone should trigger the need for a full EIA.

It also forms part of the 'Kidlington Gap' and is contained within land purchased by OCC to maintain such a gap between the village of Kidlington and the City of Oxford. As such it is an important local feature which is also afforded protection from development.

4. General Approach

Para 4.7 makes reference to alternative sites considered by the applicant. It should be noted that these sites were not assessed until after proposals were made for developments on both the Stratfield Brake Sports ground. The report prepared by the applicant's land agents was not completed until October 2022, well after the sites in Kidlington were being proposed.

In general, though I fail to see how this has any relevance in terms of the scope of an environmental assessment.

In contrast, and as previously stated, the cumulative effects of all the surrounding development sites are relevant to the requirement for an EIA, not least because CDC insisted on such reports for each of them. It would seem inequitable and incongruous in the extreme of a similar requirement was not included for any application on this site.

5. Landscape and Visual Impact

The report states that the stadium will be between 16m at its lowest point to 25m at its highest point. Most of the nearby houses in the area are 2 storey with flats in the central part of Kidlington being 3 storeys at most (up to 14m to the ridge).

Site promoters for the adjacent development site PR6A are committed to keeping the vista over the valley from the Oxford Road. A 25m high building in this vicinity will be visible for some distance and is like to dominate the skyline for miles. This would seem to be at odds with the vernacular being proposed for the housing sites very near by.

There should also be consideration of the impact of this development on new households that are due to be constructed in the near future, in particular sites PR7b, Pr7a, Pr6b and Pr6a.

To put all the development sites in the area into perspective the follow table details the cumulative effects of all current proposals

PR6A	23/01233/OUT	690 homes
PR6B	-	670 homes
PR6C	Golf course site	
PR7A	22/00747/OUT	430 homes
PR7A (Hills site)	22/03883/OUT	96 homes
PR7B	22/01611/OUT	120 homes
PR8	23/02098/OUT	1950 homes
PR8 - R&D	multiple	+ 4,000 new jobs
PR8-south (Hallams site)	21/00758/SCOP	300 homes
PR9	21/03522/OUT	540 homes
Airport expansion	23/00517/F	+300 new jobs
Langford Lane Technology Park	14/02067/OUT	+2,000 new jobs
Northern Gateway (Peartree)	18/02065/OUT	+4,500 new jobs 500 homes

Para 5.8 makes the point that the site is not publicly accessible. I would regard this as a positive aspect in view of the rewilded nature of the site and the biodiversity gain that this has provided over the past 20+ years. Any disruption to that long standing situation should be carefully assessed and would need to be considered as part of an independent environmental impact assessment.

It's notable that **para 5.13** refers to the woodland on the southern boundary as being designated under the Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which would seem to contradict the statement made in **para 2.5**.

It's also worth noting that the site plan in Appendix 1 shows the boundary as including the woodland tree line. This is incorrect. OCC has stated that the trees are not included in the site under consideration. It's baffling as to why the applicants would not be aware of this, especially as the inclusion of this area would have a material impact on the baseline calculation for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and may also be included in their claims for how BNG could be achieved.

6. Ecology and Nature Conservation

The nature of this site being established green belt means it deserves an in depth independent survey to include insects, pollinators, the brown hairstreak butterfly (which is only found in parts of Oxfordshire) along with more recently observed species such as otters. The comments from the scoping report seem somewhat dismissive of these aspects.

In general terms in respect of BNG it should be noted that in the End of Stage 0 Report prepared for OUFC in October 2022 on the main Stratfield Brake sports ground site, the conclusion of environmental consultants - Ecology Solutions Limited - was that the threshold of 10% biodiversity net gain could not be achieved.

This was of course on a much larger site, but given that most of the development requirements in terms of the stadium are the same, this would have given the applicants much greater scope for providing areas that would add to BNG.

It therefore seems even more unlikely that this could be achieved on-site within an area far smaller that will be more comprehensively developed. This would indicate that far more work would need to be done to demonstrate that 10% BNG is achievable on the smaller site.

It should also be remembered that 10% BNG is the baseline in terms of what would be expected. As OCC has a commitment to exceeding current climate change mitigation measures a more ambitious target should be considered especially in line with CDC's One Planet Living commitments.

For reference, the conclusion that Ecology Solutions came to in Appendix 4 of the above mentioned report was as follows :

"The calculation indicates that a net gain in biodiversity cannot be achieved under the current development proposals. It is recommended that proposals target a net gain in excess of 10%, which is expected to become the minimum net gain requirement following the adoption of a regulation within the Environment Act. In order to achieve a net gain of 10%, an additional 3.68 units would need to be provided either through onsite or offsite provision, or through contributions to an offsetting scheme.

It is considered that the development proposals will deliver a net gain in biodiversity through the additional enhancement measures detailed above that are not accounted for within the calculation".

Paras 6.3 and 6.5 make reference to surveys being carried out during the month of October. This would not seem to be a particularly useful time for any active or baseline study to be carried out given that this is a time when many of these creatures will be in the process of reducing their activity with the approach of winter.

There is evidence that suggests that the data gathered from these surveys was incomplete due to activity on the site. It's also been reported to me that monitoring equipment required to gather this data was disturbed/removed by the current tenant before the study was complete. I understand that this was because they were not informed and so removed the monitoring equipment as they did not know what it was for.

To confirm this it would be worth asking the applicant's consultants for evidence of permission to access the site and any liaison with the current tenants in respect of the protection of their study areas. If this can't be produced it would suggest that these studies would need to be carried out in full again, this time with the proper site permissions and notifications in place.

Para 6.11 references liquid waste. It's unclear as to what kind of pitch would be included in the development but one important consideration would be run off from any form of artificial pitch, both in terms of the leeching of chemicals from the materials it's composed of and any chemicals or fertilizers used to maintain a 4G or a hybrid pitch.

Para 6.13 Agrees that the Stratfield Brake Woodland Trust site is a priority woodland. There will need to be a full assessment of the impact on this site and its wildlife with regard to noise and light pollution as well as an increase in foot and vehicular traffic. It is very close to the proposed site.

Para 6.16 Suggests that the hedgerows on the site are of little intrinsic value. Yet there have been 2 independent surveys carried out by BBOWT and a local qualified ecologist that have shown they are valuable habitat for insects and birds. Just recently there has been a sighting of the rare hairstreak butterfly on the site which should be the subject of more expert study.

Para 6.18 references the presence of bats which require dark spaces in wild areas for survival. Again, there is some question as to the veracity of the bat survey that was carried out on the site and this should be properly verified.

Para 6.19 references the TVERC records for the site but these do not contain up to date data having been carried out up to 13 years ago. These details should be updated if they are to be relied upon in the context of this report.

Para 6.23 mentions birds, but does not include reference to insects, including butterflies. Moths and bees which have come under increasing pressure in recent years and require untouched wild areas to survive.

Para 6.24 again makes reference to aged TVERC reports which would need to be updated given the matured condition of the site since the last study was done over 8 years ago.

Para 6.35 rightly references the potential damages to the woodland areas as a result of the discharge of water, waste and dust during any construction phase. This will need accurate quantification as well as clearly defined mitigation measures.

Para 6.36 proposes the loss of arable and semi-improved grasslands on the site. Earlier references acknowledge the importance of these areas in terms of habitat so this would seem to be a contradictory statement.

Para 6.37 adds further to this confusion by conceding that the boundary hedgerows are of important ecological value. There seems to be some intrinsic confusion throughout this section of the report about the importance or otherwise of these features. This should be independently verified.

Para 6.39 also concedes that damage will be done to bat roosts during any construction phase. This needs more careful consideration and study.

Para 6.41 references the reptile survey. Again, there are questions over the data gathered in any such study on a working willow farm. There needs to be more quantifiable data on this.

Para 6.50 mentions the possibility of pollution being discharged into watercourses during the construction phase. Given the close proximity to local canals this should be more carefully considered and quantified with mitigation measures detailed.

Para 6.57 again references ecological surveys that were carried out. I am sceptical about how carefully these could have been effectively completed given that the site is working willow farm. Were the current tenants adequately involved and notified about this, particularly with respect to longitudinal studies involving the use of monitors and traps that would have had to be left undisturbed?

The site is largely left unoccupied but is secured, so there would need to be confirmation from the current tenants that they did not interfere with the monitoring equipment in any way. We would also need to know what level of occupancy was prevalent during the study periods to be certain that on-site activity did not disturb the species under study and thereby skew any results suggesting that they were not present.

Could we ask for full details of how these surveys were completed, who was involved and if the current tenants were aware? Moreover were they given instructions on which areas should be left undisturbed during the monitoring periods, assuming that this would have been possible without compromising the tenant's activities on the site?

Para 6.58 suggests the potential for pollution impacts on the nearby Woodland Trust reserve. This should be more prominently highlighted and discussed with local stakeholders.

Para 6.59 references the importance of boundary vegetation in terms of priority habitat provision. Yet it seems likely that these will be disturbed if not destroyed during the construction phase. This needs more consideration.

8. Highways and Access

An in depth transport assessment should be undertaken and must include all the PR sites included in the CDC revised local plan.

There is to be a huge amount of housing and science park development concentrated within north Oxford/Kidlington with construction transport plans stating they will use the A40, A34 and A44 as main routes to deliver materials and staff to their sites. The A34 is especially vulnerable to incidents and can clog up very quickly, nearly every day there are reports of accidents, breakdowns, congestion and stationary traffic. This often has a far reaching impact on traffic flow around the area.

With each development, the transport plans all include active travel via safe cycling or walking. Each one also heavily relies on the Parkway Railway station, the Parkway Park and Ride and the Peartree Park and Ride. If current users and spectators were both to rely on these facilities they would reach full capacity very easily. It's likely that this would lead to extensive additional street parking which in turn is likely to mean a controlled parking zone would be required. How will this be paid for, enforced and administered?

Each PR site has deliberately been designed to have fewer car parking spaces to encourage active travel to cope with the climate emergency, making these areas less polluted and also

safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Many are stating that they would have controlled parking zones through the sites.

There is already anecdotal evidence of fans actively seeking out Kidlington streets to use for car parking. People arriving by car would then actively seek out the older parts of Kidlington to park. This could lead to congestion with people not being able to get out of their driveways, and increases in accidents, as well as making the area less safe for pedestrians especially for children, the elderly, the vulnerable.

Any additional parking provision for the proposed development should be in line with the adopted OCC policy of Decide and Provide.

The entrance to the stadium site is proposed as being from Frieze Way which is a dual carriageway. Coaches arriving from the south (Oxford) would currently have to go around the Kidlington roundabout to access the entrance. The stadium site is quite small which would seem to suggest limited capacity for coaches to offload passengers without ending up queuing on Frieze Way causing congestion along this important route.

There are also questions about how separation will be maintained between home fans and away fans which could have a significant impact on how coaches are managed. How will this affect the safety of the roundabout, especially as this is the only entrance/exit for PR7A residents?

It is supposed that many people will come to this stadium via the railway station. The Oxford Road is now being improved by developers of the PR sites and OCC to encourage active travel with emphasis on pedestrians, cyclists and buses. However for car drivers it is still an important gateway into Oxford from Bicester.

The Oxford Road between Kidlington and Cutteslowe has a roundabout at either end. The northern section has the Kidlington Roundabout which connects to Bicester and the A34 onto the M40. The southern section is the Cutteslowe Roundabout and is extremely busy as it connects with the A40 which connects to Peartree, the new Northern Gateway development and then onto the expanding village of Eynsham along the A40.

At present site PR6A has been refused planning permission by OCC Highways until the cycling provision for the Cutteslowe Roundabout is resolved. At present it is dangerous for cyclists due to the amount of traffic whatever the time of day. The travel arrangements for the stadium would be likely to increase the load on these routes and further compromise them.

It has been suggested in other reports from the applicant that the Oxford Road could be closed for a length of time to allow people to access the stadium from the railway station. A footbridge was at one time proposed but has now been relegated to a 'potential bridge'.

This highlights one of the biggest concerns in getting up to 16,000 people across a busy road safely, regardless of how they arrive in the area, without serious disruption to the surrounding urban neighbourhood along a busy road.

The PR sites construction traffic reports have stated they will be utilising the A34, A40 and A44. There is now also an increase in movements of aggregate lorries from the Hanson site. Promoters for site PR8 are saying at peak construction they will have over 1,000 workers on site along with over 180 HGVs visiting the site per day. This would include Saturdays. How will the additional affect traffic flow at peak hours be coped with, both during the construction and the operation phases?

Para 8.4 references a review of local walking and cycling links. This has already been carried out. It would seem very unlikely that this development would further enhance active travel modes considering the site is bounded on all three sides by major roads.

Para 8.11 suggests that the parking provisions in the nearby park and ride facilities could be co-opted to act as off-site parking provision for the stadium. Given that these sites are provisioned for the use of people travelling into and out of Oxford via bus and using the train station this would seem to be a hugely questionable assumption, especially in view of the increases in population and associated increases in use of these facilities by new residents.

I would suggest it's highly irregular for a large development such as this, which will rely on a large influx of visitors and spectators on a regular basis, to assume that parking requirements could be covered using facilities they have no direct control over or permission to use.

There is also little empirical evidence to suggest that the large number of fans who currently visit the existing OUFC stadium by car (90%) could be persuaded to shift their mode of transport to other means in the short to medium term. This is likely to have a huge environmental and operational impact on the area.

Para 8.17 and 8.20 reference the impact of construction traffic for this site but fails to take into account the additional construction traffic associated with the numerous adjacent development sites allocated in the recent local plan partial review. These are likely to be competing for limited space on local roads at the same time.

Para 8.21 references traffic surveys that appear to have been desktop based. There is no clarification on when the data these studies were based on was collected. In my experience much of this data is now nearly 10 years out of date. As these areas are already hugely congested, any additional pressure on the road network needs full, site-based data to accurately assess the impact.

It's concerning that **para 8.27** references shops as a plural. My understanding was that there would only be one shop on the site selling club merchandise. This discrepancy needs further investigation/clarification.

Para 8.30 seems to exclude the Cutteslowe Roundabout which is already under immense strain and is likely to be further congested as a result of the new developments on both sides of the Oxford Road. This needs to be scoped into any EIA especially in terms of the impact on air quality.

Para 8.33 mentions concerns about traffic flow. This needs accurate assessment and quantification in view of the large number of fans who could be crossing the roads from the P&R sites, the station and generally on foot. There is a very large possibility that this will involve major disruption on the Oxford Road and Frieze Way.

Para 8.37 makes optimistic mention of capacity thresholds on local roads. It would seem likely that these thresholds will already be breached by the increase in local traffic due to the development sites on both sides of the Oxford Road as well as the Oxford North site close to the Wolvercote Roundabout. These assumptions are again based on desktop modelling and need to be more fully qualified in view of the drastic changes that are already due to be happening in this area.

Para 8.3 suggests magnitudes for driver delay. It's not clear if this includes the impact of multiple coaches in and out of the site or where these vehicles will lay over during matches and other events before collecting passengers for the return journey.

Para 8.41 Does not appear to allow for the impact of large numbers of spectators crossing busy roads en masse, especially as there is no firm commitment to building a bridge across the Oxford Road from the station.

Para 8.42 Makes important reference to the impact on cyclists and pedestrians, especially those not attending events and matches. This is already a serious issue in the area with at least one recent fatality of a cyclist. Frieze Way is also not adequately accessible to cyclists and pedestrians and would be likely to be made less so by these proposals. This should be more fully studied and quantified.

Para 8.53 suggests a frequency of major capacity events of 2 days per week. Previously this was set at 2 per month. If the figure is to be 2 per week a further serious re-assessment of the proposals should be made to take into account all operational aspects.

9. Noise and Vibration

Para 9.3 references the fact that there are numerous other local sites that are yet to be developed in the immediate area. This needs serious and detailed consideration in relation to these proposals.

Para 9.4 lists the facilities that are to be shoehorned into this rather limited space. This in itself is likely to have a significant environmental impact that needs detailed study and assessment.

Para 9.7 mentions the impact of noise generated by local traffic diversions and disruption. This is another important consideration that has previously been glossed over by the applicants and needs more in-depth analysis. Not only in terms of noise, but also in terms of air quality as there are likely to be large sections of stationary traffic.

Para 9.16 concedes the likely impact of noise on local dwellings. This is a very important factor, especially in view of the local surveys and views about this development. This should be given more prominence and study by means of a full EIA.

Para 9.26 seems to exclude noise associated with spectators. This should be considered not just in the context of noise emitted from the stadium during events and matches, but also in terms of the noise generated by fans arriving and leaving over what may be an extended period of time.

Para 9.47 is extremely worrying as it seems to suggest that some of the most significant sources of noise will be 'scoped out' of any environmental assessment. This includes noise from public address systems, music concerts and spectator noise during football matches. The argument is that these aspects will be mitigated by the design of the building. However this remains to be seen and would still be a significant uplift in terms of the baseline that currently exists in the area with residents close to the site experiencing the most disruption. This also appears to ignore the impact of large crowds travelling to and from the stadium.

10. Air Quality

Para 10.27 provides the qualification "*when traffic data is available*" which is strange considering the previous section on Highways and Access seemed to suggest that this was already a known factor.

Para 10.28 further confirms that desktop modelling is to be used to assess impacts on air quality and goes on to make the case that assessments of air quality will be made in the first year of operation of the stadium. It suggests that this would provide a 'worst case scenario' for the operation but gives little basis for this broad assumption.

In any event, whilst this may be useful information, considering by that point any potential damage will have been done it seems a little pointless, especially as there appears to be no plan for mitigating whatever impacts are discovered.

The greatest impact is likely to be in terms of motorised travel to the site and as we have seen in the previous section there appears to be no solid proposals for how this will be reduced other than optimistic scenarios about modal shift.

Para 10.29 seems to be an attempt to undermine the previous proposals about air quality monitoring, suggesting that there is no recognised definition of impact.

Subsequent paragraphs make the case that “*professional judgement*” should be the main descriptor of any impact on air quality. Whilst I accept there may be an element of this required, this should be allowed for within a separate assessment and study carried out as part of an EIA.

There also needs to be some forward plan for both mitigating AQ impacts as part of the operation and provisions for mitigation should the impacts be found to be excessive.

The issue of air quality cannot be seen as separate to the previous paragraph dealing with transport arrangements. Unless those are fully defined in terms of emissions, any future assessment of air quality is going to be rather pointless since there will then be no easy way to mitigate any detrimental effects.

11. Lighting

Para 11.2 acknowledges that the development will include changes to light levels in the area and that these will be obtrusive. I agree that an ELIA should be required but this should be part of an EIA rather than just addressed through the ES.

It should be noted that **figure 11.1** shows an incorrect boundary line to the south as the land under consideration does not include the forest line. It’s curious that the consultancy that has produced this study was not aware of that.

Para 11.24 confirms that the impact of lighting changes on bats and other species would not be included in an ELIA which again underlines the need for this to be done as part of a full EIA. There also needs to be careful consideration of the frequency and temperature of lighting, both of which can have detrimental effects on birds and other wildlife.

12. Flood Risk

The risk of flooding on this site and in the general area is one that has been found to be serious due to the interrelated aspects of historic flood management in the area. It should also be remembered that the significant removal of vegetation on the site that is likely to be proposed could further remove natural flood defences and have a knock-on effect to other areas, not least the railway station and the Stratfield Brake sports ground nearby which already suffers with frequent waterlogging.

Some drainage infrastructure on this site and on Stratfield Brake sports ground is also interconnected so an increase in groundwater on the triangle site could have a detrimental effect on the sports ground. This should be fully investigated before any planning permission is granted.

Para 12.18 acknowledges some of the above referencing the existing field ditches and the culvert that runs under the A4260. It’s unlikely that these will be adequate if the site is significantly developed over, reducing the natural flood holding capacity of the open site.

It's concerning that at this stage there has been no consultation with the LLFA as stated in **Para 12.49**. This again highlights the need for a requirement for a full EIA which would include full consultation with OCC and a proper assessment of the flooding situation in the area. With adjacent populations in areas like Garden City subject to frequent incidents of groundwater flooding which has necessitated the need for active pumping measures we can't afford to let this situation worsen.

There should also be discussion with Thames Water with regard to their capacity for dealing with both surface water and waste from this site.

13. Socio-economics

Para 13.9 lists the completed development effects yet fails to include the impact on existing businesses. There may be net benefits in terms of additional employment opportunities but there are few details about what those opportunities might be and how likely it would be that those roles would be filled by people local to the development.

It's likely that, in the early stages at least, major roles will continue to be taken by existing employees from their current location. This is also likely to apply to many of the less senior roles. The applicants will be under an obligation to relocate existing employees which in turn could have impacts on air quality as they commute in. They will not legally be able to prioritise applicants from the local area. This should be scoped into an EIA.

The effect on deprivation levels suggests that there is a high level of unemployment in the area at the moment. This is inaccurate and many local businesses already struggle to find local staff. Additional competition for staff could make things worse again necessitating further commuting into the area, putting more strain on local transport infrastructure.

The final point about additional accessible open space seems out of place in terms of SE considerations. Even if it did have some bearing, there's little evidence as to the extent or accessibility of such space especially in the context of the already large amount of open space available in the area. This would also need to be offset against the loss of biodiversity which is likely to be large.

14. Climate change

Para 14.60 states that no climate change modelling has been done. The report relies solely on available data.

Given CDC's commitment to tackling the climate change emergency, we should insist that a site of this significance should include a detailed assessment of the likely impact on climate change that this development would have on our targets. This should take into account the embedded carbon in the building itself as well as the carbon cost of the demolition of the club's existing stadium which will be less than 25 years old when/if they vacate it.

Para 14.62 seeks to scope out the construction phase of the development. The county council should resist this and insist on this being a key element of any environmental assessment. The carbon footprint of the construction phase should be scoped into an EIA and allow for the additional load that this will put on the area in respect of the other adjacent development sites.

16. Significant effects

Para 16.5 makes claims for the development to provide improvements to public transport connections and support for active travel. There are no details of these enhancements

being a direct result of the development itself. There are already plans for improvements in these transport modes that have no connection to the development being proposed.

Appendix 1 – Site Location plan

As previously mentioned above. The southern boundary line on the site drawing is incorrect. The site under consideration by OCC does not include the tree line on the southern border. There are suggestions within the scoping opinion application that the applicant will landscape this area. This would not be possible as there are no proposals to include this area in any disposal of the land under consideration. This should also be excluded from any claims as to BNG.

Conclusion

I see no reason why this site should not be subject to a full EIA along with the other reports, assessments and studies referenced in the report.

With special reference to wildlife and biodiversity concerns on the site I am aware of at least 2 detailed studies carried out by local wildlife groups as well as a local expert ecologist. These have revealed habitats and species that are unique to Oxfordshire and so deserve proper protection.

I include below summary details from a local ecologist Dr Judy Webb giving some examples of finds she has made on the site. I have also forwarded copies of two detailed reports compiled by Dr Webb after some extensive surveys of the site.

I have provided details of these additional reports annexed to my response as County Councillor for the area, but could provide them again on request.

Summary of ecological survey carried out by Dr Judy Webb

I have recently completed 6 surveys and written a report on my ecological survey findings from the Triangle. I also had a couple of quick visits to the Stratfield Brake east section that is adjacent to the south of the Triangle and did a separate report on that. Of course that southern section is ancient woodland and part of the Cherwell district wildlife site 'Stratfield Brake'. My excel spreadsheet of records will be going to TVERC today.

Some headline news from my survey about the Triangle:

- It is quite rich in plant diversity (surprising) and it is proving to be very rich in insect diversity (very surprising - my surveys from end June to Aug will only scratch the surface of total diversity of insects)
- the habitats do not fit neatly into the UK habitat classification, the nearest is probably a wet version of neutral meadows for the rides and the willow coppice is a single species version of scrub, but it has 'meadow' type layer of flowers underneath as it casts only very light shade, so very unusual.
- piecemeal rotational cutting willow and ride management by the tenant (Wonderwood business) has created ideal mosaic of habitats with constant new sunny glade creation – giving the site the same sort of diversity one might expect from coppice with rides managed woodland anywhere – especially good for butterflies which love the sunny glades.
- **the fact that it is directly adjacent to ancient woodland is very important** – insects from the woodland deadwood are out feeding on flowers in the triangle, supporting their life cycles.

Triangle used as forage area for species from the woodland like birds and the deer (and bats but no proof). Very important the habitats of Triangle stay connected to the Ancient woodland. Without Triangle habitats, Ancient woodland will suffer isolation and species loss as it is a really small strip anyway.

- the considerable **winter waterlogging** of the site (heavy clay) controls all the plant community, surprisingly many wetland plants present; in particular stimulating the sheets of Common Fleabane which fill the rides and under nearly all the willow coppice (a golden flood of flowers covered in insects at the moment – never seen such abundance of this plant anywhere before in my life, millions of flowers- see attached). The pollen and nectar source it provides is exceptional and very important to all pollinating insects. But it will be probably be downgraded as it is a common plant!. **Very difficult if not impossible to recreate this strange habitat as it depends on winter waterlogged heavy clay.**
- one 'rare' insect on the fleabane (a fly) and also a 'local' moth species breeding on it. **Fleabane has probably a long history on site to accumulate rare dependent insects** - probably originally existed for 100s of years marginal to ancient woodland Stratfield Brake in the wet ditches (which have been there a long time by the look of them). Then moved into the Triangle from there. I see fleabane in lots of other sites and never found this rare fly.
- one England red list plant – the **Corn Mint**. There is a real lot of it. Good for pollinators
- good numbers of common insects including **declining pollinators like bumble bees**. Vast numbers of honey bee workers, but these not under threat. **16 species of butterfly and I hear purple hairstreaks have been also found.**
- butterfly surveys needed for **rare brown hairstreaks and black hairstreaks and white letter hairstreaks**. Black hairstreaks already known from Stratfield Brake new woodland area planting. I found white letter hairstreak along Frieze way.
- Muntjac and Roe Deer use the site in conjunction with Stratfield Brake.
- I found a good number of juvenile frogs, but likely not breeding there – big enough to have hopped across Frieze Way at night from Stratfield brake wetland complex breeding area.

Stratfield brake ancient woodland (limits exactly as today except for loss due to Frieze Way and the A34, full of ancient woodland indicator plants like bluebells) can be traced back by historical references to earliest record as '**coppice**' in around **1730**. More importantly perhaps, a visit recently showed mature standard oaks **but some very old coppice stools**. You can estimate stool age roughly by basal diameter. 2m wide ash and oak coppice stools are found fairly commonly and there is one oak coppice stool with many trunks arising that is **3m diameter** – this indicates many hundreds of years old. These coppice stools are therefore far older than the standard uncut trees. One estimate puts a 3m dia oak coppice stool at possibly 1000 yrs old.

Strat Brake also has an **old raised bank or trackway** along the southern margin (which is actually the Kidlington parish boundary) – this is interesting and needs more research on its history.

The natural history society ANHSO group has arranged a bat survey walk to Stratfield Brake (west side) next Monday evening starting at 7.30pm led by a local bat expert. I'm planning to go along and

note which bat species are found and try to get the records into the system. If they use the western part of the DWS, a fair presumption is that they will be using the eastern section and the Triangle.





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