

Comment for planning application 24/00539/F

Application Number	24/00539/F
Location	Land To The East Of Stratfield Brake And West Of Oxford Parkway Railway Station Oxford Road Kidlington
Proposal	Erection of a stadium (Use Class F2) with flexible commercial and community facilities and uses including for conferences, exhibitions, education, and other events, club shop, public restaurant, bar, health and wellbeing facility/clinic, and gym (Use Class E/Sui Generis), hotel (Use Class C1), external concourse/fan-zone, car and cycle parking, access and highway works, utilities, public realm, landscaping and all associated and ancillary works and structures
Case Officer	Laura Bell
Organisation Name	Matthew Organ
Address	Hinton Crescent, Didcot, OX11 9GB
Type of Comment	Support
Type	neighbour
Comments	<p>If OUFC fail to secure this planning application this will make national headlines, the new Football Governance Bill has been brought in to ensure that community football clubs are preserved and supported. Such football clubs should not face the threat of extinction due to previous mismanagement. Unfortunately OUFC's lease at the Kassam Stadium is expiring in 2026 with the club facing nowhere else to play. They are currently forced into a damning contract whereby the club is strangled by a sizeable rent and outrageous yearly service charge. OUFC have dragged themselves back up the football league from the National League with this ball & chain behind them and have done brilliantly to stabilise in League One. Yet still, Championship football is on cards if they could put that rent saving into the playing budget, as well as finally benefitting from food and drink sales within the stadium.</p> <p>You only have to look at Brighton & Hove Albion to see the benefits this can be bring to the local community and Oxfordshire. Previous owners sold their original ground for their own financial gain with the club receiving almost zero money from the sale (The Manor, being a similar scenario). They were then forced to play in an undesirable athletics stadium for over a decade, averaging just 6000 fans per season until their final year. This poorly located "stadium", with zero atmosphere, facilities and rent costs almost forced Brighton out of business. That was until they submitted planning for a new stadium, outside of Brighton but with a dedicated train station (sounds familiar). Brightons new Falmer Stadium had an initial capacity of 22,000 but has since been increased to 31,800. Brighton's catchment area is extremely similar to Oxfords, with very few local professional football clubs to compete with. Brightons final season in the old stadium saw an average attendance of 7300, their first season in the new stadium saw an average of 20,000. They have not had a smaller average attendance since despite being one league above Oxford for 7 of those years, and since 2017 have averaged 30,000 in the Premier League.</p> <p>Oxford's proposal is just 16,000, fairly modest in comparison yet has the same potential, especially with the club pushing for promotion to the Championship.</p> <p>While the footballing significance is clear, an independent assessment has revealed the incredible economic impact of Brighton's achievements on the city.</p> <p>In 2022/23 season, Brighton brought in 595m to the local economy. This total included 327m of direct income, 26m spent by visitors, 20m spent on goods and services in Brighton & Hove by club employees and a further 222m of brand and media value to the local economy, which greatly increases the city's profile around the world.</p> <p>This is the second time since promotion to the Premier League in 2017 that the club's contribution to the local economy has been measured.</p> <p>Compared to the first appraisal, released in 2019 and based on the club's first season in the Premier League, it has gone up nearly three-fold by an astonishing 281%.</p> <p>Last season 54,000 visitors from overseas were among the 600,000 people who watched</p>

games at the American Express Stadium.

By spending 26m in the city, visitors from outside Brighton & Hove supported 379 jobs while the club's employees spent more than 20m, in businesses in and around the city, evidence of the club's strong local supply chains.

In addition, the Amex hosted over 830 events last season, attracting 48,000 visitors and contributing 3.5m to the local economy.

The potential this application has for the city of Oxford and Oxfordshire is astonishing and cannot be ignored. Sure, there will be some objections by locals worried by traffic and parking, but as seen at Brighton this can be easily overcome especially with a major train station on the doorstep. Parking schemes can be introduced, pedestrian crossings, bridges can all be applied at a later date as seen at many stadiums.

The architects have already designed and seen the construction of a 17,000 seat stadium for Brentford, on a smaller triangular piece of land. There is no reason why this stadium cannot be built to a similar high standard on a piece of Green Belt that is currently a piece of scrubland, previously used as a BMX track.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to benefit future generations and to safeguard the football club.

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Attachments