

April 13, 2024

Planning Committee, Cherwell District Council.  
By email: [planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

**Ref: 24/00539/F**

We object to the application from Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) to build a new stadium on the site known as 'The Triangle' for the reasons listed below. We live just over a mile south of The Triangle on Banbury Rd.

### **1. Traffic congestion and road closures**

As the committee will know, OUFC used the wrong traffic modelling tool. We understand OUFC will submit new data on traffic modelling when they have used the correct software. We will comment on it then.

Although OUFC's submission speaks of diversions, they amount to closure of Oxford Road for "at least 30 minutes" before and after matches. Filling and emptying a 16,000-seater stadium is likely to take much longer. Oxford Road is a major conduit into the city from the north, with several frequent bus services serving Kidlington, Banbury, Bicester, Woodstock, Witney and villages along these routes. The impact of road closures on these services would be severe. It is a matter of public record that the County Council has forbidden OUFC to close any roads. It is baffling, to say the least, that OUFC has proposed closures of Oxford Rd.

Traffic would be diverted along a route that is already heavily congested. The Cutteslowe roundabout is one of the busiest in Oxford, with continuous streams of through traffic along the A40 as well as local traffic. Most of the fan base is located in East Oxford and by car they would have to travel around the Ring Road and either along Banbury/Oxford Road or Frieze Way. This would add to the heavily congested Cutteslowe and Peartree roundabouts.

We noticed the separate application to build a footbridge. It is bizarre this was not included in the stadium proposal, unless the club intends to defer or cancel its construction. A footbridge would be absolutely essential for the safety of fans and other members of the public.

### **2. Parking**

There is no evidence that local fans or fans of other League One clubs would travel by train to Oxford Parkway. It is much cheaper for fans to share a car and use the Park and Ride facilities at Peartree and Oxford Parkway. However, this would reduce the availability of parking spaces for those intending to shop in Oxford, which would harm businesses in Oxford city centre. There is also inadequate cycle parking, which for a 16,000-seater stadium should be 320 spaces, not 150.

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It is evident that OUFC expects parking to be a major concern for local residents because the club is proposing to introduce Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) on match days up to 2 km from the stadium in Kidlington, North Oxford and Yarnton. Since residents in these areas would then have to pay for parking permits it is essential that they are consulted before any such scheme is introduced. It is also unlikely that the fine for parking illegally in a CPZ would be a sufficient deterrent if there are several people in a car to share the fine.

There are car parks in nearby Cutteslowe Park and Stratfield Brake. What measures would be taken to ensure those who wish to use these facilities for their own sport and leisure activities are not prevented by fans filling these car parks?

### 3. Green Belt

The National Planning Policy Framework requires 'very special circumstances' (VSC) for any development of Green Belt land. We dispute the 'very special circumstances' OUFC claims to justify its proposed development of this Green Belt site:

(a) The club has made itself homeless by 2026. It has not tried to negotiate to stay at its existing home at the Kassam Stadium, for unknown reasons. Whatever those reasons, the club's homelessness in 2026 cannot be claimed as a VSC.

(b) The club claims it will be financially sustainable once it owns its own stadium. What evidence is there that it will own its own stadium, or the associated conference facilities, or hotel or the commercial retail sites? The club could be sold by its current owners, and ownership of the stadium and all the associated businesses would pass to the new owner(s).

(c) The social and community benefits are not guaranteed because the funding of the new stadium has not been secured.

(d) The only economic benefit will be for the club owners: Sumrith Thanakarnjanasuth, Horst Geicke, Supranee Piamph, Erick Thohir and Anindya Bakrie. They are overseas investors. It is arguable that businesses in the centre of Oxford and in Summertown will suffer economically as a result of the Park and Rides filling up with fans' cars.

(e) We cannot see any environmental benefits of the proposal. How can it possibly be considered sustainable to tear down an existing football stadium and build another on Green Belt land? It would be much better if the club negotiated to remain at the Kassam Stadium.

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(f) The club has a stated aim that 90% of fans travel to the stadium by sustainable means, i.e. not by car. Of course the club cannot dictate how fans choose to travel to the stadium. The club's intention to introduce CPZs in Kidlington, North Oxford and Yarnton within 2km of the stadium is an admission its aim will not be achieved.

(g) The claim there will be improved access to the Green Belt is risible. Once the houses are built between Kidlington and Oxford, with the approval of Cherwell District Council, there will be nothing left of the 'Kidlington Gap' if this proposal goes ahead. Kidlington and Oxford will have merged through urban sprawl – precisely what the Green Belt was created to prevent.

### 4. Drainage

In the recent very wet weather the site has been severely flooded. The photos below were taken in The Triangle on 31/12/23, following heavy rain.



The site is in a slight hollow and water runs into it from Frieze Way and Oxford Rd. The water disappears only through evaporation because the clay soil is impermeable. This raises the question of where the water will go if the site is developed, especially as very wet weather is likely to become the norm with climate change.

### 5. Safety concerns

The Triangle is enclosed by very busy roads. There are few access points into and out of the proposed stadium. In the event of an emergency 16,000 people could not possibly be evacuated from the stadium within 8 minutes. If an emergency

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evacuation were to take place it is unclear where fans could go and be safe. They would exit onto Oxford Rd and Frieze Way, where they would put themselves and other members of the public at risk.

### 6. Finance

OUFC does not have a good record financially, and it is in debt. Financially it is at the mercy of its owners, who could withdraw their support at any moment. It is unclear whether and from where the £150M cost of the stadium is going to be raised. It is quite possible the entire project could fail before the construction of the stadium is completed, leaving Oxfordshire taxpayers with a very significant bill to repurpose the site. OUFC cannot offer any guarantees this will not happen, and the club's track record offers little confidence in its financial management.

We do understand that OUFC means a great deal to its fans, and we do not want the club to fold. But the management of the club is entirely responsible for making the club homeless from 2026 by refusing to negotiate to remain at the Kassam Stadium. The Triangle is a completely inappropriate site for a new stadium for the reasons we have outlined.

We urge Cherwell District Council to reject this planning application.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Sutton and Pat White  
(by email)