

I object to this planning application on multiple grounds:

Objections due to harm to the Green Belt and not meeting the high bar for “very special circumstances”.

In the only recently signed off Local Plan the Triangle was left as Green Belt. The Local Plan should not be torn up for this application. With an additional 4,400 houses approved for the nearby area, the last gap separating Kidlington and Oxford should be maintained. The application does not meet the very high bar for “very special circumstances” for a number of reasons:

1. Most importantly, the Club does not have to move. The owner of the current stadium, Firoka, has directly confirmed that the club can seek to negotiate a new lease from 2026. That may not suit the club’s ambitions to be free of the Kassam, but it does mean that they have an option to stay at the Kassam until more suitable private land becomes available.
2. The club can hardly argue that a renewal of the stadium lease after 2026 is not possible. They have concluded several lease agreements with Firoka since the Kassam was built including 2 in the recent past. A new deal is clearly doable. The OUFC Chairman Grant Ferguson said on a recent podcast that the club had good relations with Firoka! It is depressing that OUFC think that the public cannot see through its deception that it will be homeless in 2026 when this is demonstrably untrue and a situation of its own making.
3. On the subject of OUFC having the option of renewing its Kassam lease until other private land becomes available for it to acquire, the alternative sites report submitted with the planning application demonstrates that such sites are available. I hope Cherwell Planning can see that OUFC has not adequately considered all available alternative sites as it is required to do to justify “very special circumstances”. In fact it prepared its alternative sites report after the event in order to justify its choice of the Triangle and not as a genuine attempt to explore options that did not require Green Belt land.
4. The “very special circumstances” argument does not justify a hotel as a hotel is not required to put on a football match. Nor do those circumstances justify any other commercial activity on the site.
5. The overall economic gains will be small as jobs are just transferred across Oxford.
6. OUFC has already taken Green Belt land for the Kassam. It should not be allowed to take even more just 25 years later.

Objections relating to Transport and Parking

Oxfordshire County Council leader Liz Leffman confirmed in writing to all 4 of the Parish councils neighbouring the Triangle that OCC will not approve any lease of land unless OUFC’s planning application ensures that the Oxford Road (A4165) will not be closed or even traffic disturbed on that road on match days. It has been suggested that a footbridge may be required to achieve this.

Unbelievably, OUFC has then submitted an application with road closures in it as the suggested measure for traffic control and no footbridge.

On the grounds of transport and parking alone the application should be rejected:

1. Even with a footbridge, fans will simply find the route of least resistance to cross the Oxford Rd from the Parkway station and Park & Ride. This road will be seriously disrupted and no planning measures will ever be effective in stopping that.
2. The A4165 Oxford Rd is not a residential road like the one that the Kassam is located on. It is a main route used by Kidlington and surrounding residents to travel into Oxford. On Saturday lunch times and weekday rush hour evenings the traffic can be bumper to bumper from the Sainsbury's roundabout to the Cutteslowe roundabout in either direction. I have used this road for 25 years. The club's claims that it is lightly used are completely disingenuous. If the A34 is closed or blocked this road becomes a car park.
3. Injecting 4,400 new homes into the area will make this traffic even worse.
4. Fans will come by car irrespective of the ambitions of the club for 90% of them not to. They will use the park and ride, the station car parks, the Sainsbury's car park, Gosford Hill school car park, Garden City residential roads etc. The congestion this causes is not acceptable to a small community like Kidlington. If CPZs are required then the club should pay for them in perpetuity for all residents. Without the club, CPZs would not be required. The same applies to North Oxford, Begbroke and any other residential roads within 2 miles of the stadium.
5. Use of the park and ride by fans will be detrimental to shoppers and other rail users and quite possibly intimidating as rival fans arrive to (presumably) a police presence.
6. Exit from the park and ride will be a nightmare due to traffic light phasing. This will soon cause fans to prefer to park in Kidlington.
7. The yet to be completed VISSIM traffic modelling must ensure that it assumes all the recently approved 4,400 homes for the area are built and occupied.
8. The planning application for a footbridge should be approved and funding secured before any approval is given for the stadium. The club should pay for the footbridge.
9. A footbridge across Oxford Rd from the Oxford Parkway site is however problematical. A bridge connecting the site directly to the Triangle would be enormous as it would have to span both the Oxford Rd and the A34 which runs underneath the Oxford Rd (from the back of the station building to the first available piece of pavement beyond the A34 is around 65 meters. It's a full 300m to the Triangle). There have been suggestions that a footbridge could be located by the Sainsbury's roundabout. It is not possible to see how that could be safely accessed due to the very narrow footpaths over the bridge over the A34. The fans would have crossed the road by then anyway.
10. The plans seem to remove a bus lane in the Oxford Rd. That would inconvenience Kidlington commuters every day of the week just so that OUFC can have a home game every other week of the season. Hardly community spirited.

Objection due to ignoring Local Democracy

The Kidlington Parish poll on 10 May 2023 showed a majority of 69% against building a stadium in Kidlington on a respectable and statistically relevant 30% turnout. Both Oxfordshire County Council surveys held during consultations and a survey by Layla Moran MP showed a majority of local residents were opposed to the plans.

Predictably concerted action by OUFC, Oxvox, OUSP and the Yellows Forum has led to attempts to drown out local voices. Local democracy should prevail.