

Comment for planning application 24/00539/F

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| 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 | Christopher Vogel |
| Address | 68 Islip Road,Oxford |
| Type of Comment | Objection |
| Type | neighbour |
| Comments | <p>I write to object to the proposed OUFC stadium and associated facilities to be built at Stratfield Brake.</p> <p>My objections centre around the themes of harm to the Green Belt and Oxford's traffic situation.</p> <p>Green Belt As per the National Planning Policy Framework 152, "Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances". OUFC acknowledge that proposed stadium is categorised as inappropriate development and that it causes harm to the Green Belt. Stratfield Brake is an important site in the Oxford-Kidlington Green Belt, and within the context of already-planned developments around North Oxford, Kidlington and Yarnton, the site becomes even more important in maintaining the Green Belt. The threshold to meet the "very special circumstances" for an inappropriate development must therefore take into account the increased importance of the Stratfield Brake site within the context of Oxford's Green Belt. In the application, OUFC claim that they need to find a new home by 2026. However, there are public statements by the owners of Kassam Stadium saying that it is possible for OUFC to stay (eg Oxford Mail, 18th January 2024 "Oxford United stadium owner open for club staying at Kassam"). Kassam Stadium itself is only about 20 years old, so is not yet in need of replacing. A commercial disagreement between OUFC and Kassam cannot be sufficient grounds for "very special circumstances" on its own, and a much clearer justification should be provided to meet the "very special circumstances" requirement for inappropriate Green Belt development.</p> <p>Transport Oxford has major transport congestion issues, which the proposed stadium and facilities would significantly exacerbate. Traffic congestion is already severe, and the various residential developments proposed and in development in North Oxford, Kidlington, and Yarnton will already add significant pressure to transport infrastructure. The proposed 16,000 seat stadium includes plans for 150 cycle spaces and car parking including 106 regular spaces and an additional 78 disabled spots. The nearby Oxford Parkway station has (per station website) 150 cycle spaces with a further 40 at the park and ride, and 830 car parks. The Match Day Interim travel plan expects for home supporters (Table 4) that 334 will cycle, and 3155 will take the train. 8062 will use a park and ride. In Table 5, away supporters are forecast to predominantly come by rail (749) and park and ride (499). Appendix 10.1 Transport Assessment Part 1 lists Oxford's Park & Rides, with the total number of parking spaces across the city being 7609, insufficient to meet their own expected demand and ignoring that the Park & Rides will be used by people not travelling to matches. The Oxford-Marylebone train offers approximately 600 seats per hour, and even with a potential increase in capacity with the opening of the East West Rail connection, there is insufficient capacity to meet the proposed volumes of travel by rail, even if Oxford Parkway</p> |

Station could handle the associated passenger volumes. Again, this also neglects use of the railway by other non-stadium associated traffic which will effectively reduce the available capacity.

The consequence of this will be much higher travel by car than included in the planning application, which will have a severely detrimental effect on local residents with cars being parked on local streets in the absence of any other available parking.

The proposals include closing Oxford Road around matches to allow crossing from Oxford Parkway to the stadium. Per Cllr Robey to Kidlington Parish Council, "The County Council cabinet has required of OUFC, before the lease of the Triangle site is finally agreed, to produce detailed plans that include the following without disrupting vehicle movements on the Oxford Road", and Cllr Leffman "We will not support any proposal that includes the closure of the road on match days". The proposal fails to do this, despite the significant adverse effect that this will have.

The site is expected to be used year-round with up to 580 non-match events per year. These will have different numbers of attendees, with capacity for up to 1000 people in total. The larger events forecast in the planning documents include approximately 85 events with 150 attendees on average, and 68 with an average of 700 attendees. The proposed transport options and traffic plans are inadequate to meet even these larger non-match events.

The Stratfield Brake site is the wrong place for a new stadium, and the proposal demonstrates this through its failure to justify how it meets the "very special circumstances" required for building on the Green Belt. The stadium is being squashed into a too-small site and will cause significant disruption to the local area and increase pressure on an already struggling traffic system, not to mention the associated adverse environmental impact. Oxford already has a functioning football stadium in East Oxford, and in the era of increasing concern about the climate, serious questions need to be raised about whether this inadequate proposal can justify the almost 10,000 tonnes of CO₂e (Table 16.12) associated with the new stadium.

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Attachments