

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	geoffrey thompson
Address	55 South Avenue,Kidlington,OX5 1DQ
Type of Comment	Objection
Type	neighbour
Comments	<p>OUFC Road closures (referred to as 'diversions') are planned despite Oxfordshire County Council's statement that the Oxford Road cannot be closed. They state that it will be for match days only but for a company like OUFC they would want to make the 100 million pounds spent back so it will operate 24/7. Surely therefore the County Council must object to the planning application?</p> <p>OUFC State they want 93% of supports using public transport when only 18% of supports do so now. There is no way this will happen and they will be parking for free down our local roads.</p> <p>Extract "Key bus services and coaches will be marshalled through Oxford Road during periods of lighter pedestrian flows". 30 minutes is a short period of time to move 16,000 people so lighter flows will be unlikely in this time. This means bus delays on matchdays which include Saturdays.</p> <p>The proposal states that 'many of our fans live within 20 minutes walk, cycle, or on public transport of the proposed location' - this is incorrect: the main fan base is in East Oxford and public transport, cycling or walking would be a challenge.</p> <p>What about the safety of non-football cyclists and pedestrians who want to use the pedestrian paths and cycleways on matchdays and find themselves caught up in large numbers of fans?</p> <p>OUFC acknowledges that the stadium is inappropriate development and that it would cause harm to the Green Belt but tries to justify it with 'very special circumstances' as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o The club has to find a new home by 2026. FoSB says the club made itself homeless and hasn't tried to negotiate to stay at the Kassam Stadium (because it doesn't want to) so can't claim this as a VSC. Please tell Cherwell District Council that it needs to challenge OUFC's claims. This must include contact with Firoka, the stadium company, to confirm their position.o There is no other available suitable site. FoSB says the Alternative Sites Report was pre-determined and therefore unreliable and invalid because it was prepared after the event (ie after the lease had been agreed by the County Council cabinet) to provide "justification for the application site, which is the Club's identified location for the stadium and ancillary facilities". (Alternative Sites Assessment para 1.2). <p>Also, the Alternative Sites Report says that one of the reasons the Kassam Site was not considered further was because "Landowner confirmed not willing to allow continued use or sell." The appendices show letters relating to other sites where there is a significant reason not to proceed with further consideration, but no evidence is shown for the Kassam Site. Furthermore, this statement conflicts with information in the public domain where the owner has stated it is possible for OUFC to stay at the Kassam Stadium.</p>

- o There will be benefits to the Club associated with the financial sustainability of owning their own stadium. FoSB says there is no guarantee that the club will own its own stadium, in fact it is likely that it will not! Nor is it likely to own the conference facilities, or hotel, or the commercial retail sites that it thinks will generate revenue. Even if the current owners say OUFC will own these the club could be sold and the situation could change overnight.

- o There will be social and community benefits. FoSB says these are not guaranteed because the funding is not guaranteed, and anyway they could be delivered from the current stadium.

- o Economic benefits: FoSB says much of this could be delivered at the Kassam Stadium where it would arguably be of more benefit. And again the figures seem overly optimistic. The economic disadvantages to Oxford's city centre are overlooked. Full Park & Rides because the fans got there first and additional traffic will not help struggling retail outlets in the City.

- o Environmental benefits: FoSB says the most environmentally friendly solution is to stay at the Kassam Stadium, particularly with the Cowley Branch Line in the pipeline. The Club's aim for the Proposed Development is to achieve at least a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good'. Aims are not guarantees! And a 'Very Good' is a low bar. The sustainability of demolishing a perfectly functioning 23-year-old concrete stadium and replacing it with a new one, outside of the City of Oxford is directly at odds with all Oxfordshire Councils Climate Crisis promises.

- o Sustainable travel: FoSB says the Club "has an aim that 90% of fans will travel to the Stadium by sustainable modes" however there is no effective strategy in place to achieve this. Many (or based on current travel patterns, most) fans will be attracted to the parking at the Park & Ride sites. The potential for OUFC to impact how away fans travel is limited.

- o Biodiversity enhancement: FoSB says that the development will not deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain. See our detailed comments on this on our website in our FoSB ecology comment document.

- o Improved access to the Green Belt: FoSB says these claims are disingenuous because the amount of open Green Belt and green space will be minimal. The garden area is only about the size of the Kidlington Roundabout and the heavy footfall will mean it won't stay green for long. Also, on match days the plaza and garden will be a fan-zone, so we presume only really accessible to the general public on other days! No public rights of way are being created over the site.

Entry, Exit and Evacuation and Major Incidents/Disaster

The site is:

- o bounded by busy roads

- o too small for the level of proposed development (reference Design & Review Panel statement: "there is a general feeling that everything is ever so slightly squeezed and that there is no spare land")

o constrained by features such as the car park, woodland and attenuation ponds

There are few access points into the site and there is a difference in level from the highway to the stadium. In the event of an emergency it is impossible to see how the stadium could be safely evacuated within 8 minutes. Similarly it is impossible to see where people could muster safely.

The planning application lists laws and regulations but fails to address key safety issues.

In general there is a lack of safety both for spectators, for users of the adjacent roads, and members of the public who are not involved in the football.

There is also insufficient room to allow for segregation of home and away fans.

The Design & Review Panel (which the local authority should have regard to) commented:

"There is a concern that the proposed main entrance area point to the stadium may not be able to safely accommodate the sheer volume of fans. It is felt there may not be enough arrival space to accommodate the supporters before they disperse to their seats. A lack of space in this area could also give rise to problems of supporter segregation. The practical problems of access are also accentuated by the difference in levels from the highway."

This is clearly a safety issue.

The safety issues around access to and egress from the proposed stadium site are not addressed in the documents supporting the application other than by a request for the planning consent to be conditioned.

Oxford Parkway Station Safety

This station is small and unsuitable for crowds of fans, mixing both home and away, and arriving en masse. The platforms are narrow as is the footbridge across the track. Fans and other users will be at risk.

Finally

We have been told that OUFC have received support from around the world these comments should not be taken as support as they would not be attending and do not live here. It will be the locals who will have to fight and stop this from going ahead.