

29 Hazel Crescent  
Kidlington  
April 2024

### **To Cherwell District Council re the Stratfield Brake development**

I should like to request the council thinks very carefully about the siting of the Oxford United ground in the fields south of Kidlington. There are many reasons to believe it is a bad idea. It seems that the council is being forced to make a difficult decision when they do not have the options of time and adequate finance to make the correct decision. Repeatedly we have seen responses to criticisms of the project, they are clearly desperate solutions, suggested to try and make the project work when the true consequences are not considered. It is these consequences which are important.

For example, the transport access is not adequate for the task. One suggestion is that at every game, the road to and from Oxford is cut off or blocked to assist fans access from the railway. This seems a poor and ill considered choice, and one the residents of Kidlington will be paying for long into the future. It is inevitable that on a game day, Frieze Way also be blocked by the traffic, so the routes for emergency vehicles to and from Kidlington will be impassable and there are no other direct routes south. If Sandy Lane is closed off, as threatened, then even a relief route will be stopped. This will mean some residents who need rapid access to the emergency services of the JR will be delayed considerably, taking much longer routes to Headington. This will have dire consequences for some people who need fast access to the hospital. Thus there will be additional deaths of some residents, or following delayed treatment, they will undergo permanent changes to their health and will require life-long (expensive) support. These expenses will need to be factored into the cost of this project.

The design of the stadium and facilities has increased with facilities, (such as the hotel), being added when there is no clear benefit to the club or the area. A stadium larger than the existing one is shows idealism that is not supportable. The larger stadium predicated on an idea that there will be an increase in numbers of fans and an increased use of the facilities. It is extremely unlikely that things will change. The facilities the fans enjoy at the present are very good, with a greater local population available to use them. There is no reason to believe things will improve for Oxford United if they get *another* new stadium. It is a shame, but the football business is arranged so that the leading clubs will remain in the lead and no others contenders can rise to match them. No lower club can afford to buy their way in the upper leagues and if they produce home grown talent, which might help their rise, the player will wish to move to a superior club for their own careers. Teams such as Oxford United will sell a good player to a higher club to avail themselves of the player's value. Thus no move for the team into a higher league is possible. The idea that they will have improved numbers is self deluding at best and disingenuous at worst.

Moreover, twenty years ago Oxford United owned their own stadium, but a series of poor decisions has left them homeless. Why should we believe that things will be better this time? What guarantees do we have that they will not need another new stadium from the local tax payer before 2044? What has changed to make it better this time? Why should we believe that the promises of improved numbers is any more likely than it was twenty years ago?

However all of this is circumstantial and only additional reasons for declining the idea. The major reason for blocking the move is to make sure they stay in the stadium they are in. It is a modern stadium and there is no need for them to move. Only the wishes of the current owner to realise more money for himself by selling it prevents them staying. If he was not given permission for change use of the land he would not be able to redevelop it. He would either make sure he can derive reasonable revenue from the football franchise, or sell it on, potentially to the club itself.

This is important. *There is significant carbon embodied in the current stadium.* To knock it down and build another would be a criminal waste of the energy and resources invested in the current building. There is no longer a debate about the reality of global warming. The only discussion left is how bad it will be and how fast the impacts will arrive, so far, they have happened far faster than even the most gloomy forecasts of the seventies predicted. Global warming will make our current way of life increasingly difficult and ultimately impossible. With the increased instability of the weather it will become harder to feed the population. Within a very small number of years we will be more concerned with the survival of our way of life than the future of any institution.

It is the duty of every one of us to do all we can to reduce all waste of carbon. Rebuilding the stadium will release a great deal of unnecessary carbon dioxide. Personally, I do not resist the use of the land for housing, that has to be built somewhere, it will be a shame to loose the farmland between Kidlington and Oxford, but it might be necessary. What is **not** necessary is to waste the resources and generate even more carbon dioxide. Ultimately we are all accountable for our actions, in this case, the carbon we waste. The carbon wasted in the unnecessary building of a new stadium when a perfectly good one exists is going to be on the heads of every member of the council. Each one of them should consider how they will answer, not to the fans of today, but the generations to come.

Stop this dangerous action now.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Professor Peter Kyberd.

Professor Peter Kyberd