

I object to the application (24/00539/F) to build a stadium, hotel and other commercial facilities on Green Belt land between Oxford and Kidlington for the following reasons:

1. There are no “very special circumstances” to justify this development on the Green Belt.

- The owner of the Kassam Stadium has stated publicly (e.g. as reported in the Oxford Mail 18th January 2024) that he is open to OUFC staying at the Kassam. This places severe doubts on the club’s claim that it has no choice but to find a new home. The Council should challenge this assertion and independently contact Firoka to confirm their position.
- Staying at the current stadium and improving it is clearly the most environmentally sustainable option. The construction of a new stadium must conflict with the Council’s climate crisis promises.

2. The loss of Green Belt land is unacceptable

- The Oxford Green Belt is meant to be a permanently protected area but this proposal destroys the last piece of Green Belt between Oxford and Kidlington.
- The boundary of the Green Belt has recently been reviewed and confirmed. The Kidlington area lost a large part of the local Green Belt in the recent Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan and local residents were led to believe that further losses would not be imposed. This promise should be honoured.
- The land was taken into public ownership precisely to protect the Kidlington Gap and protect it from development.

3. Adverse impact on nature and biodiversity

- The independent ecologist’s report produced by Dr Judith Webb shows an incredible diversity of species on the site including several rare species. It is not credible that the proposed development could increase this biodiversity when the large majority of the site will be built on and the small remaining green areas will be subjected to very high footfall from users of the stadium.
- Surrounding natural areas will also be adversely impacted by noise, light pollution and loss of the stadium site as a source of food for wildlife.

4. The site will not be safe for its users or the public

- The site is bordered by two busy roads. The main access will involve crossing Oxford Road causing massive disruption to local residents and anyone trying to travel to Oxford.
- There are no plans included to make crossing this road safe by separating stadium users from traffic other than by closing the road. The total number of times that this will happen is not clear but it will be more often than the number of football matches as the stadium will have other uses.
- The area around Oxford parkway will effectively be a no-go area for anyone other than stadium users when events are being held.

5. There will be unacceptable congestion and parking issues for Kidlington residents

- The “aim” for 90% use of sustainable transport to reach the site is not credible when 83% of fans currently travel by car. Therefore, Park and Ride sites will be filled by those attending the stadium and be denied to other users. Most of Kidlington will become a car park and proposed Controlled Parking Zones are likely to be ineffective unless fines are considerably higher than public transport fares and are actually enforced.
- Congestion caused by the closure of Oxford Road and the proposed alternative routes are unacceptable.