

Objection to planning application 25/01346/OUT

Proposal to build 340 houses on green belt land behind the Moors, Kidlington.

9th July 2025

From

Tom Pilgrim, 2 Cordwainers Road, Cheltenham, GL52 2DQ

I am strongly opposed to the development of 340 houses. I wish to object to the proposed development on green belt land behind the Moors.

The key issues I wish to address are as follows:

1. The land forms part of the Green Belt. It is agricultural land, leading to further fields, the Cherwell floodplain meadows, the Community Woodland, the River Cherwell and further countryside beyond. To the north there is not a building in sight before the small villages of Hampton Poyle and Thrupp. Nor are there any roads or other structures. To the east there are views of St Mary the Virgin, a Grade 1 listed church which lies close to many other grade 2 listed houses within the Church Street conservation area. The importance of the setting of the Church and buildings was made very clear by the Planning Inspector in an earlier 1995/6 Planning Inquiry.

The Government states that it “attaches great importance to Green Belts” and that “the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”. This land has never been developed and has always been open countryside without man-made intrusions. The applicant claims that it is “Grey Belt” but it is hard to see that this is what the Government intended when it talked of “previously developed land”.

The site was not included on the Cherwell 2042 Local Plan. Cherwell District Council (CDC) have stated that the principal reason against inclusion was that “the land is within the Oxford Green Belt. For the Local Plan to release land from the Green Belt it has to demonstrate exceptional circumstances for doing so”. In the Council’s opinion, no such circumstances could be demonstrated.

For a planning application outside of the Local Plan, “very special circumstances” must be demonstrated for a site to be released from the Green Belt; no such circumstances currently pertain.

It appears that the developer’s justification for selecting the Moors for 300 houses... including two cricket pitches was necessitated by the proposal to relocate Oxford United’s new stadium to Stratfield Brake. This plan would have led to the loss of the cricket pitch and many other village sporting venues.

This makes it clear that the origin of the proposed development at the Moors was not based on housing need (see further comments regarding planned housing below).

Since the stadium proposal later moved to the “Triangle Site” and Stratfield Brake remains intact the relocation of cricket pitches is not necessary, and neither was the sacrifice of the Green Belt for the accompanying and unnecessary housing estate (should this argument have been adequate to prove “exceptional circumstances” in the first place).

Kidlington already has cricket pitches that are easily accessible with good infrastructure and facilities for the few months they are used during the year.

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2. 5,000 houses and other developments are already in the pipeline for the Kidlington area. 4,400 houses were allocated on Green Belt land around Kidlington as recently as 2021. None have yet been built, but planning applications are well advanced and the eventual total is likely to be more than 5,000. Most of these homes will be available for people from Kidlington. Kidlington deserves to keep what little remains of its green space.

3. Infrastructure will already be stretched to, and possibly beyond, the limit by the already planned developments. The 4,400+ houses, and other development that is included in Cherwell’s Plan (adopted in 2021) will have a major impact on a transport network which currently often operates at or over capacity. Congestion adversely affects both individual residents and businesses. The improvements included as part of Cherwell’s Plan do not provide major increases in capacity and there seems to be an optimistic over-reliance on people shifting to public transport, cycling and walking. This further, unplanned for and speculative, development behind the Moors will only exacerbate pressures on the transport network without making any contribution to addressing them.

The Moors (despite the proposed demolition of a house) is not suitable to sustain extra traffic that would inevitably result from the construction of 340 houses. The Moors is a narrow residential road which has already experienced traffic problems. The road has been provided with traffic calming measures (road humps) to help alleviate existing issues.

To provide access for this number of new houses will result in traffic chaos, environmental pollution, and dangerous road conditions and impact greatly on the residents who live nearby including elderly residents of Homewell House, Moorside Place and children who attend North Kidlington School.

All of the sites already allocated as part of Cherwell’s plan for 4,400+ homes have access directly onto major roads such as the A44, or the Banbury/Oxford and Bicester Roads. It is unacceptable to us that the proposed development only has access onto and via minor residential roads which already experience traffic problems.

4. The site is important for nature conservation. The fields comprising the site are themselves relatively small and bounded by hedges and trees which support a variety of wildlife, particularly birds. These fields are a haven for skylarks. Beyond further small fields, meadows and woodland run along the River Cherwell and are designated as a Conservation Target Area. The site is also close to the St Mary's Fields Nature Reserve. Any development on the proposed site would bring urban uses closer to these nature conservation areas and would be damaging to nature.

5. The land is important for people's health and well-being. This land provides one of the last remaining areas of unspoilt tranquil and open countryside on the doorstep of Kidlington which is hugely valued and used for recreation and relaxation by its residents and visitors alike. There are two public rights of way that cross or run along the edge of the site. These are much used by local residents (and others) for recreation and relaxation. There are also many informal paths around most of the field boundaries which have been extensively used for many years. The importance of access to peaceful open space for people's physical and mental health is widely recognised.

I strongly support the designation of this land as a Local Green Space (LGS). This is a positive proposal supported by Kidlington Parish Council to create a "Green Ring" around Kidlington. There were a large number of responses from the public in support of this proposal. Cherwell Council also supported the "Green Ring" concept in an early stage of consultation.

This area has been really important to me personally, and is an intrinsic part of what makes Kidlington great.

6. Flooding. The east end of the site is regularly under water in winter as it lies only one metre above the normal level of the River Cherwell. We have understood that this is caused by groundwater (water table) flooding though this does not seem to be recognised in the consultants' reports. There is also regular flooding elsewhere on the land. The development would create significant runoff, and it appears that only a portion of this would be dealt with through the existing piped drainage system in Kidlington. We are concerned that the drainage ponds and swales proposed on site to deal with the rainwater draining from the proposed development would not be able to cope, resulting in periodic flooding to neighbouring properties.

Flooding in properties in the Moors adjacent to this land is a regular occurrence and is likely to happen more frequently in the future

I believe there is also a serious flood risk to listed buildings and other properties in the Conservation area if this proposal is allowed to go ahead. This is a problem which will only get worse with more frequent rainfall as the climate continues to change.

It is worth noting that a proposal to extend the burial ground in the fields to the west was rejected due to flooding risk. This has proved to be a wise decision given recent flooding history (see photograph below).



Land west of the burial ground floods regularly

There are well publicised problems with sewerage and water supply capacity in the Oxford area. Absolutely essential upgrades to Thames Water's sewage processing capacity will only be complete by 2031, with an interim solution by 2027 allowing planned developments to go ahead. This proposed solution is unlikely to have capacity for further unplanned development. Thames Water has a poor record for meeting its own deadlines which must be alarming for all local residents.

I urge the elected representatives at Cherwell District Council to carefully consider the numerous planning objections and to reflect the concerns of local residents by refusing planning consent.