

# SAVE STRATFIELD BRAKE – ACT NOW

*Dear Resident,*

Oxford United FC want to build a huge football stadium and commercial complex on 44 acres at Stratfield Brake. The County Council who own the land has been asked to transfer it to OUFC under a 250 year lease.

Kidlington Development Watch (KDW) has put a lot of time and effort into protecting our Green Belt. So it's not surprising that we object strongly to this plan. Stratfield Brake is not the right answer to OUFC's problems.

**Kidlington Development Watch think that OUFC's plans would be very damaging and not in the best interests of the local communities. If you agree, it's important to respond to the County Council's public consultation which closes on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. It can be found online at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stratfield-brake-land-use-proposal-2022>**

The County wants your views on whether OUFC's proposals meet their six negotiating objectives. Our views are given below, though it's best to use your own words to say why you object - or support – the plans. We recommend telling the County if you live or work locally and say how the plans would affect you personally.

**Please also contact your parish council and let them know their views - our local parish councils are still considering how to respond and will listen to you.** You can email their clerks at:

[clerk@gosfordandwatereaton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@gosfordandwatereaton-pc.gov.uk) and [clerk@kidlington-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@kidlington-pc.gov.uk)

**You can also ask our local County Councillors to represent your views.** For North Oxford Wards email: [andrew.gant@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.gant@oxfordshire.gov.uk) and copy to [cllrwade@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:cllrwade@oxford.gov.uk) [cllrsgoddard@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:cllrsgoddard@oxford.gov.uk)

For Kidlington, Gosford & Water Eaton, Yarnton email: [ian.middleton@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ian.middleton@oxfordshire.gov.uk) (He's the councillor for the Stratfield Brake area) and [nigel.simpson@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.simpson@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**We have mapped all the developments already agreed for this area. You will probably be shocked and surprised by their full extent. Visit: [www.kidlingtondw.org](http://www.kidlingtondw.org) for more information.**

## Our views on the six County Council Objectives.

**County Council Objective 1) Maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington. Improve access to nature and green spaces**

- Developing Stratfield Brake can NEVER meet this objective. The County acquired the land to help maintain the Kidlington Gap. Our whole area faces massive housing and other developments. Stratfield Brake, with its large nature reserve, is almost the last remaining green space stopping Kidlington being absorbed by Oxford City. The importance of keeping it as Green Belt was recently confirmed by a planning Inspector and Cherwell District Council. The County should not enter into negotiations to build a huge stadium and busy commercial complex next to a nature reserve - in breach of Green Belt planning policy.
- An 18,000 capacity stadium would be a very large dominating structure, possibly as high as a 7 storey block of flats. We can expect noise and light pollution (which could be every weekend of the football season) plus other large events, including noisy late night concerts. It would be completely out of place with low rise houses and nature reserves around it. This is NOT appropriate Green Belt development.
- Stratfield Brake is important to Kidlington's residents for mental health and well-being as it provides access to a natural environment and open spaces and also opportunities for exercise. The stadium would have a major impact on biodiversity and the wildlife at the adjacent Woodland Trust Nature Reserve and also on the area's tranquillity and enjoyment by visitors.

**County Council Objective 2) enhance facilities for local sports groups and on-going financial support**

- The land at Stratfield Brake is in public ownership. If it is given over to OUFC, the County would have little control over how it is managed. That is short sighted and wrong. It is proposed that OUFC would be

responsible, under a 250 year lease, for funding community sport facilities equivalent to those which will be lost. How will the County enforce this? Likely – as happened with Kassam - the club and its overseas investors will demand more and more planning concessions to increase the commercial value and retail turnover of the complex and their profit. Local sports groups could be squeezed out.

**County Council Objective 3) significantly improve the infrastructure connectivity in this location, improving public transport to reduce the need for car travel in so far as possible, and to improve sustainable transport through increased walking, cycling and rail use**

- It would be just as easy and much more sustainable to improve the public transport options at Kassam.
- Little parking is proposed on site. Fans coming by car would be told to use the Park & Rides. In practice many would park on local streets and be prepared to walk a long way to avoid parking charges! Residents only parking zones & yellow lines would need to be introduced over a very wide area to control street parking. In which case, residents could have to pay an annual fee to park outside their home.
- The proposed stadium retail, leisure, hotel and commercial development would increase local traffic. Traffic in the area is already set to increase hugely as a result of large-scale development in the area (4,400 homes as well as Oxford North's 4,500 jobs and 480 homes).

**County Council Objective 4) develop local employment opportunities in Oxfordshire**

- This area has almost full employment. It is already set to 'benefit' from new jobs, hotels and retail outlets thanks to other developments such as Oxford North and at Langford Lane (with Begbroke & Yarnton to come). Moving the stadium is likely to cause job losses at the existing stadium and surrounding area.

**County Council Objective 5) increase education and innovation through the provision of a sports centre of excellence and facilities linked to elite sport, community sport, health and wellbeing**

- Elite sport is not needed to encourage community sport, health and wellbeing. Stratfield Brake is already good for this. Local sporting facilities could be improved without building the stadium.

**County Council Objective 6) support net zero carbon emissions through highly sustainable development**

- This is nonsense. All our councils have declared a climate emergency. It is absolutely not sustainable to demolish a recently built stadium and commercial area and replace it with another in a different place.

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***The County Council ask if we agree with their negotiation objectives. Please join us in asking them to ADD:***

- **Any proposal for Stratfield Brake will comply fully with the recently adopted Cherwell local plan.**

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***Another BIG concern you might want to mention is how this proposal will be financed and managed***

- The land at Stratfield Brake is in public ownership. The only way this proposal is likely to go ahead is if the County give away almost all of the massive potential development value of the land. How can they be sure the promised benefits will outweigh this loss? Should the County allow overseas developers to benefit from the disposal of publicly owned land?
- OUFC's potential overseas backers will expect to profit from their investment. The financial survival of OUFC's 'own' stadium will rely on extensive commercial development (retail, hotel, conference facilities etc) and very high footfall to maximise turnover all year round. It could fail - there are many directly competing developments already planned for this area. The Council should be cautious of relying on overseas investment. Personal guarantees from overseas residents are rarely enforceable. The County – and Cherwell might be exposed to further costs if things go wrong for OUFC, on or off the pitch.
- Given the massive costs – and long lead time to deliver a new stadium complex – why not invest more effort into sorting out the problems at the current stadium? Refurbishing it and putting it onto a better financial footing seems a much more sensible and sustainable (environmentally and financially) option. Oxford City Council can - and should - do more to help solve OUFC's current lease problems. The County Council should not consider sacrificing one of Kidlington's few remaining accessible areas of green space to provide a 'quick fix' to OUFC's problems. It should NOT agree to be rushed into a decision.

**Thank you for your time and interest in reading this – now please take action !**