

## **Kidlington Parish Council**

### **Chair's report: February 2023**

Cherwell District Council will shortly be publishing an updated sports field strategy, identifying requirements for the Kidlington area, mainly additional soccer fields including all-weather pitches. What the District Council does not have is the funds to pay for all this. We shall be looking to national sports bodies for contributions and also, if (still a big if) the Triangle stadium proposal is to go ahead, to Oxford United. We shall also be looking for help with maintaining and upgrading the Stratfield Brake pavilion, now that we do not expect a stadium development on the site. This will continue to be run in the immediate future by the District Council, though we hold the sub-lease and pay most of the costs.

More discussions have been taking place on the projected closure of the Sandy Lane level crossing. The District Council is still adamant that it should be replaced only by a cycle and pedestrian bridge. Together with the adjacent parish councils, we are pressing for a vehicular connection to be kept, either by leaving the crossing open, or by building a road bridge. The latter option is favoured by the developers of the large Oxford University site at Begbroke, and they are also prepared to pay for the costs. The bridge would be for light traffic only, and the narrow bridge over the canal would be retained.

Together with many other parish councils, we are very concerned by the commercial proposals for the so-called Botley West Solar Farm, which would occupy large stretches of Green Belt to the West of us and would be the largest solar farm in Europe. Since electricity can be generated anywhere, there are far less invasive alternatives to this, and we cannot see what direct benefits there would be for local residents. Unfortunately the size of the scheme means that local authorities would be bypassed for planning approval, and the application would go straight to central government. We think the best way to oppose it would be through a joint position by all the affected parish councils.

The planned reopening of Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre is another major concern. Like many councillors, I am strongly opposed to the government's current immigration policy, but I do not think national-level policies should really be the parish council's concern except insofar as they affect us directly. In this case I think our focus should be the issue of conditions in the facility. In the past these were a long way from satisfactory, and there is obviously a real risk of that happening again, particularly in the form of overcrowding, given the current immigration crisis.

We are still waiting for the revised draft of the Cherwell Local Plan, and in particular to see whether it still includes the proposals for housing developments behind the Moors and South-East of Woodstock. We shall be looking hard at the calculations of future housing requirements, including those of Oxford City. While the two developments in question were not designated to meet Oxford's needs directly, the need for them obviously depends to a significant extent on the overall housing need calculation.

DAVID ROBESY