

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: December 2023

There have been some developments on the main items I reported on last time.

We had an online meeting with OUFC scheduled for mid-December to update us on their plans, but this was cancelled, yet again, at the last minute, apparently after discussions between the Club and the County Council. I would like to think that this was because the County Council had reiterated to the Club that their current plans to close the Oxford Road before and after matches are unacceptable.

More recently we have had a detailed discussion with the Club about the potential benefits for Kidlington residents of the stadium development. As readers will remember, the County Council will require a "clear and detailed set of proposals" from Club with regard to its benefit pledges, and the Council's other strategic priorities, before finally signing off the lease to the Triangle site. We hope to agree a set of specific benefits with the Club so that we can report to the County Council that we are satisfied by them before the lease is signed off.

The main areas of discussion concern the upgrading and future maintenance of the Stratfield Brake sports pitches, the facilities available to residents in the proposed new stadium and the surrounding site, OUFC participation in mental health and wellbeing programmes, educational and employment opportunities for Kidlington residents. There is the real possibility that the Parish Council could save a very substantial annual cost for the maintenance of the sports pitches, which currently takes up a disproportionate amount of our income.

On the proposed development of 300 houses on the land North-East of the Moors, the developers have put in what is termed a scoping application to the District Council planners to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment will be required for the site. We have put forward detailed arguments why it should be required.

This is not yet a full planning application, and we are also arguing that the application should not be decided before the 2040 Local Plan is finalised, because our objection to it depends in part on issues that relate to the plan as a whole, not just this site: mainly, the District Council's current calculation of the number of houses required in the plan.

While continuing to oppose the proposal, we have been duty bound to discuss some of its details with the developers, in particular the benefits that it might bring to the Village. The developers are proposing two cricket pitches and a pavilion between St Mary's Church and the new houses, and there is the possibility of a substantial contribution to the provision and enhancement of other recreational facilities elsewhere, which may include a skate park.

We are also continuing to work with the other parish councils affected to oppose the proposed Botley West Solar Farm development, the enormous arrays of solar panels in the area West of the A44 and North of the A40. Only a tiny part of this would be in Kidlington Parish, on either side of the A44 immediately South of Langford Lane. But the impact on the surrounding countryside would be truly drastic. You can see more details and our reasons for objecting on our webpage at http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk/Environment_40499.aspx.

DAVID ROBEY