

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: June 2023

Readers will have received, I hope, the printed circular that the Parish Council recently sent out to residents to alert them to the publication of Oxford United's detailed plans for the stadium on the Triangle site, and the related online survey by the County Council. Links to the plans and the survey can be found at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/thetriangle; the survey closes on 23 July and email and written submissions will be accepted .

The circular also listed our main concerns with the plans as they stand: parking and traffic congestion; the frequency of matches and any other major events; the need for long-term guarantees of any commitments the Club may make. Of these traffic congestion is the most problematic. Readers will be well aware that this is an increasing problem in Kidlington, and will become worse when 4,400 new houses are built locally: traffic along the Oxford Road has already become heavier in the last months, and the bus service has become more unreliable, though Stagecoach have assured us that they are making improvements.

It remains to be seen how exactly the traffic flow would be managed on match days if the stadium goes ahead, and exactly what steps will be taken to prevent match-day crowds from parking in Kidlington. It is likely to be some time before the Club can meet its aim of 90% attendance by public transport. The reference to a "potential" footbridge across the Oxford Road is inadequate, and the suggestion that the Oxford Road might be closed for part of match days wholly unacceptable.

We are writing to the County Council to say that we will object to the stadium proposal unless we receive sufficient details on the plans to satisfy our concerns.

We have now been told that responses to the County Council's consultation survey will be broken down by parish, and that an analysis will be published by September 5th. The should (just) be in time for us to consider the results at our Council Meeting on 7 September, from which we will be able to send a follow-up submission to the County Council in time for its Cabinet meeting on 19 September, when the decision will be made whether or not to let the project go ahead to the next stage. In order to avoid the risk of consultation fatigue on the part of residents, we have decided not to hold a further survey or poll of our own. The results of the recent Parish Poll remain, of course, significant.

Two other major planning issues are very much to the fore at the moment. We are supporting the large number of local councils that are objecting to the proposed Botley West Solar Farm in West Oxfordshire. We have made a Climate Emergency declaration, and strongly support the move to renewable energy, but that is not a reason to sacrifice a huge amount of precious local Green Belt for this purpose. We also continue to make common cause with Yarnton, Begbroke and Gosford & Water Eaton on the issue of the Sandy Lane level crossing. It now appears that the Oxford University developers of the very large housing site at Begbroke are prepared to finance a road bridge for light traffic in place of the level crossing, and that Network Rail are also considering this option. Cherwell and Oxford County Council have still to be convinced.

DAVID ROBEY