

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: October 2022

This year's customary fireworks display at Stratfield Brake was something of an experiment: following what seems to be a growing public feeling, we decided to opt for a low-noise display. The results were rather mixed. Generally speaking the display (rather more expensive than the usual one) was good, but it lacked the key element of rockets, presumably the noisiest one but unfortunately also the one that many people most enjoy. We shall be reviewing how it went carefully in the coming months before deciding what to do next year.

We have still not had any meetings with Oxford United about their plans for Stratfield Brake after the first one in the summer. They have however sent us circulars with the results of the surveys they conducted shortly after the meeting, and an accompanying update that informs us that they "look forward to further direct engagement with the community in the coming months as we start formal consultation on our emerging principles early in the new year". This seems rather vague, and the continuing delay is frustrating, but not, I think, all that surprising, since it will take time for them to answer the questions we are asking. These are:

1. Does the Club really need to move to Stratfield Brake?
2. What benefits, sporting and other, would there be for Kidlington residents?
3. How would the negative impacts be mitigated: noise, congestion, parking, crowds?
4. What would the site look like? How green/eco-friendly would it be, how would it fit with the surrounding landscape?
5. What replacement facilities would there be for the current sports club users?
6. How can we be sure any commitments entered into will be honoured?

See <http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk/UserFiles/Files/StratfieldBrakeupdateSept2022.pdf> for more information on our present position on the issue, which will remain neutral until we can see detailed, specific and concrete plans.

The Club also circulated the results of the two surveys it conducted, of residents and fans. The 1226 responses to the fan survey show that over 30% would travel to matches by car, about the same number as by train, which underlines the critical need for measures to prevent on-street parking in the Village. The 716 responses (94% apparently local) to the residents survey show that transport and parking is by far the greatest concern (over 70%). The survey does not seem to have given respondents the opportunity to object to the proposal as a whole.

Meanwhile, in keeping with our present neutral position, we have had and will have discussions with the Friends of Stratfield Brake (<https://www.friendsofstratfieldbrake.org/>). We also continue to do our best to defend the Green Belt ring around the Village. The imminent consultation on Cherwell District Council's 2040 Local Plan looks as if it will not be proposing any new Green Belt encroachments for housing: more information will become available when the consultation opens on 14 December. There is little room for complacency on this issue, however. Oxford City is also running (at the time of writing) a consultation on its 2040 Plan, which includes the proposal for a Green Belt Review in order to accommodate its future housing needs. Given that we are already losing a great deal of the Green Belt around the Village in order to meet these needs, we are objecting strongly to this proposal. It is no doubt one of the factors that led to the recent abandonment of the Oxfordshire-wide plan because of disagreement between the councils involved. We can look forward, if that is the word, to seeing how this disagreement plays out in the coming months and years.