

KIDLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL: THE FUTURE OF STRATFIELD BRAKE

The following is Kidlington Parish Council's current position regarding Oxford United Football Club's proposal to relocate their stadium to Stratfield Brake.

The proposal came to the Council out of the blue just before Christmas: we had previously only had discussions with the Club about the relocation of their training fields. It puts the Council in an extremely difficult position. Since we hold a 100-year lease on the site, we are able to decide whether or not the proposal goes ahead to the next stage. We also know that the village is deeply divided on the issue, though we cannot yet know in what proportion.

Oxford County Council have conducted an opinion survey on the issue. For details see

https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s59844/CA_MAR1522R15%20APPENDIX%201.pdf

Of the 818 local residents (from Kidlington and Gosford and Water Eaton) who responded, 58% were against, 38% in favour, and only 4% unsure; about 40% were OUFC supporters. This may or may not reflect the current state of opinion in the Village: we cannot know how representative the number responding were.

The proposal comes at a difficult time for the village as well, with the prospect of 4,400 new dwellings in and around it, and the consequent reduction of the Green Belt ring that surrounds us. The Stratfield Brake proposal would not remove that Green Belt ring altogether, but it would reduce it still further. You can see a [map and more details](#) here.

The decision the Council has taken is to remain neutral on the issue for the time being. This is because the Club's plans are at present very general and subject to change, and we should not and cannot decide on them until we know exactly what they are. This applies whether we eventually say yes or no. Until we have detailed, specific and concrete information about the plans it would clearly be foolish to say yes, and it would equally be unfair, given the many Kidlington residents who support the plans, to say no.

For these reasons we have agreed to enter into discussions with the Club and the County Council without any commitment, challenging the Club to develop plans that are sufficiently clear and specific to enable us to take a decision. These will start shortly. Before finally deciding we have also decided to consult residents in as fair, sound and systematic a way as possible. The discussions are therefore intended to help residents make up their minds as well as councillors.

In the discussions we shall be pressing for answers to six main questions.

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?

Whatever the answers to these questions, councillors and residents will have to weigh them against the other major factor: the further loss of Green Belt around Kidlington.

Whichever way the Parish Council eventually decides, residents can be assured that we will only take into account the interests of Kidlington, not of the Club.

DAVID ROBEY
31 May 2022