

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: November 2023

I reported last month on the Parish Council's grave concerns over Oxford United's current plans to close the Oxford Road before and after matches at the new stadium on the Triangle site. With the support of the three adjoining parishes, Begbroke, Gosford & Water Eaton, and Yarnton, we wrote to the County Council leader, Liz Leffman, about this. We received in return a clear statement that OCC will not support any proposal that includes the closure of the road on match days.

We take this as a firm commitment that the proposed closure will not take place. OCC have stipulated that the lease for the site will not finally be signed unless OUFC can satisfy a number of conditions over and above the planning process, and these include, as I said last month, a transport plan that does not disrupt vehicle movement on the Oxford Road. The final decision has been delegated to Council officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, Councillor Dan Levy. We have met with Councillor Levy, who has confirmed that the final decision will not be made before the Club's proposals have been made public (except for items that are commercially confidential), and stakeholders such as ourselves given the opportunity to comment on them.

We are concurrently in discussion with the Club about the benefits to residents from the stadium development. OCC has stipulated a number of general requirements, which we shall try to turn into specific commitments. The expectation is that such commitments will be given binding force either in the lease or in a supplementary agreement, and we shall be seeking further details about this.

We are also entering into discussion with the developers of the proposed site of 300 new houses on the Green Belt site North-East of the Moors. It appears that they propose to put in a planning application in the near future, quite possibly before the 2040 Local Plan is finalised. We remain firmly opposed to this proposal, but since it may go ahead nevertheless, it would be remiss of us not to engage with them on the details. We presume, notably, that there would be no question of building on the part of the site immediately to the North of St Mary's Church. An earlier version of the Local Plan suggested possible use for this as a cricket pitch, which may well be acceptable.

On less contentious matters, the Parish Council staff recently organized the annual fireworks display at Stratfield Brake, and the Christmas lights switch-on in the High Street. As last year, the fireworks were fully ecological, and unlike last year, which was beset by technical problems, the display was very good. Attendance was also good, but not as good as in earlier years. On the other hand the Christmas lights switch-on was very well attended. There was a long row of stalls and amusements in the High Street, and a good crowd came to listen to recitals by a number of excellent school choirs, rounded off by the outstanding Kidlington Brass Band.

DAVID ROBEY