

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: December 2022

Two major documents have been made public since my last report, Oxford United's redacted report on their football stadium plans (<https://oufcstadium.co.uk/december-update/>), and Cherwell District Council's draft 2040 Local Plan, shortly to go out for consultation, and currently available at <https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MIId=3872&Ver=4>.

The Club's report was made public shortly after I wrote my last Chair's report. Readers may remember that the Parish Council has listed six key questions to which it will need detailed, concrete and specific answers before consulting residents and deciding whether to relinquish its lease on Stratfield Brake. While the Club's report provides some answers to these questions, many remain unanswered. It discusses and illustrates a number of options for the site, but does not give enough information on the option that it apparently prefers, that of a stadium and nothing else. We would need to know much more about issues such as the transport strategy, measures to control parking and traffic congestion, the number and nature of matches and events per year, and the all-important question of the long-term dependability of any commitments made. It may be that the Club can answer these questions, but they will require a great deal of further investigation and discussion.

It may also be that all this will not be needed, if the option goes ahead of the triangle site across Frieze Way from Stratfield Brake. At the time of writing we are waiting for a County Council Director's report on the subject that will go to the Cabinet meeting on 24 January. Once we have seen this, the Parish Council will firm up its position on the triangle, about which as yet we have no details whatever. Most of the issues that apply to Stratfield Brake apply to the triangle as well, in some cases perhaps to a lesser extent. There will be difficulties over transport, parking control, and traffic congestion, especially with the additional traffic generated by the 4,400 new homes in the area and the current plans for traffic filters in Oxford City Centre. There is also an additional major issue regarding the Kidlington Green Belt gap. With the planned housing developments on the North Oxford Golf Course and the site opposite, all that would be left of the gap along the Oxford Road would be the triangle in question and a similar triangle on the other side. It is hard to see how removing one of the triangles would be compatible with the County Council's stated aim of maintaining the "green barrier" between Oxford and Kidlington.

New Green Belt housing developments have also come back on the agenda in the District Council's draft 2040 Local Plan, which now proposes 300 new houses in the Green Belt on the North-East edge of the Moors, as well as reviving the earlier scheme for 450 houses on the South-East edge of Woodstock. As I said in a previous report, in the preceding consultation the District Council explicitly excluded any option for further Green Belt residential development in Kidlington. We will be pressing to know the reasons for this change of plan, and what the exceptional circumstances are that would justify further Green Belt encroachments. Coming on top of the 4,400 new homes in the Green Belt in Kidlington and the three adjacent parishes, these two developments will not only involve further Green Belt loss, but will add to increasing problems of traffic congestion. The Parish Council has supported Kidlington Development Watch's application to Cherwell for the site behind the Moors to be designated a Local Green Space for strong environmental and recreational reasons. While the current Draft Plan proposes to leave in the Green Belt the section of the site adjacent to St Mary's Church, possibly as a cricket pitch, a large number of new houses on the rest of the site would detract significantly from the character of the Moors on one side and the attractiveness of the fields on the other. We shall be looking at the case for this new development very closely.