

OUFC Stadium Project: KPC's position on the Triangle.

As many councillors will know, OCC decided today to enter into negotiations with OUFC about the Triangle site. Details of the recommendations approved are appended below. Here is what I said in my statement to the Cabinet:

1. For Kidlington, there are strong arguments for and against United's stadium project.
2. We have 14,000 residents, and not surprisingly opinions are deeply divided.
3. KPC's position on SB was to remain neutral until we had plans with detailed answers to our questions about residents' concerns and aspirations.
4. In the case of the Triangle our status is quite different: we are leaseholders of SB, but we have no rights over the Triangle—though it is in Kidlington.
5. Nevertheless it is our duty to represent as best we can the interests of residents.
6. We think we do this by taking the same provisional position on the Triangle as on SB: neutral until our questions are fully answered.
7. For the most part these questions match the CC's objectives on the agenda paper. But we would like to see some made more explicit
 - a. What non-sporting as well as sporting benefits for residents?
 - b. Exactly what mitigations of noise, traffic congestion, parking: we need a lot more details
 - c. Maintaining the green barrier between Kidlington and Oxford is very problematic in the case of the Triangle: as a result of the planned new housing developments North of Cutteslowe, building on the Triangle could effectively remove the barrier.
 - d. What is the long-term dependability of commitments the Club may make—we have respect for the present management, but who knows what might happen in the future?
 - We don't want a white elephant on such a prominent site.
8. Therefore vital that CC's engagement with the Club today should be non-binding: if a firm decision is made in favour, it should only be when all such questions have been fully and convincingly answered.
9. Today's officer report states a commitment to stakeholder consultation, and adequate time must be allowed for this before the final decision is made
 - a. KPC must be able to give the detailed plans careful consideration.
 - b. And we must have the time and opportunity to consult residents before we take a firm view one way or the other.
10. This could be the most important development that has taken place in Kidlington for as long as most of us can remember.
11. Therefore only right that KPC and residents should have a significant say in the decision.

I hope councillors are all happy with this, but we will need to develop it into a written public statement of our position.

Next Steps

Bearing in mind that we are now only consultees on the proposals, it would make sense for us to cease talking about a final yes/no decision, because the next Council may or may not want to take that, and in any case it may not carry much weight. Since we are not taking the final decision, it may or may not be best to take a balanced view without coming down on one side or the other. Equally there may now be less point in holding a Parish Poll or any other form of yes/no consultation. I **propose** we leave these options open for the time being, depending on how the negotiations develop, and not commit ourselves to them definitively.

We agreed at the Extraordinary Meeting last week that we should now engage in informal consultations with residents. I think the next step should be to talk to the local sports clubs about the benefits they would like to see from the Triangle proposal. We have previously not talked with the clubs directly, because we were waiting for clearer details from OUFC about the Stratfield Brake proposal, and they were themselves talking

to the Club. Given that the situation has now changed so much, I think the time has come to talk to them. I therefore **propose** that we hold a meeting with all the Kidlington sports clubs, and invite Neil McWilliams from OUFC and an appropriate officer from Cherwell to discuss sports provision strategy and how the stadium development might contribute to it. All councillors would be free to attend if they wish.

This does not mean that the stadium development will take place, but it should be incumbent on KPC to support the clubs in gaining maximum benefit from it if it does.

We should bear in mind that OUFC conducted a survey last year on residents' concerns and aspirations about the stadium development (<http://oufcstadium.co.uk/have-your-say/>). Among other things this asked what additional facilities residents would like to see for the community (question 4), but the responses are not reported, perhaps because they were inconclusive.

OCC Cabinet agenda 24 January 2023, item 6.

The following are the recommendations accepted by Cabinet.

- (a) Authorise Officers to enter into negotiations regarding Heads of Terms with Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) to agree the commercial terms on which Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) would lease land to the east of Frieze Way / south of Kidlington roundabout (known as the 'triangle') to OUFC for the development of a new football stadium, subject to further Cabinet approval of detailed plans and undertakings and to planning permission.
- (b) Emphasise that Heads of Terms are non-binding and that any final agreement to lease or dispose of land to OUFC for the purposes of a stadium will be a Cabinet decision, published on the Forward Plan of Business.
- (c) Instruct officers to ensure that, prior to any recommendation to Cabinet regarding entering into a contractual or legal agreement with OUFC, sufficient information and undertakings have been received from OUFC to ensure that the objectives set out in (2a) below will be met.
- (d) Instruct officers to identify and mitigate medium and long-term financial risks and liabilities associated with any final agreement with OUFC to lease or dispose of the land.
- (e) Instruct officers to provide regular updates on progress to the Cabinet Member for Property and, as appropriate, Cabinet as a whole, and to add these Cabinet updates to the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Business to enable transparency and public scrutiny / engagement.
- (f) Instruct officers to identify further opportunities for engagement with a broad range of stakeholders as proposals for a scheme are developed. This should include an engagement strategy from OUFC to demonstrate how they will take into account stakeholder and community views as the scheme promoter.

If the Cabinet decides to proceed it is RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet requires:

- (a) Officers to ensure that any agreements with OUFC are consistent with the County Council's strategic priorities, by achieving the following objectives for the use of the OCC's land:
 - maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington
 - improve access to nature and green spaces
 - enhance facilities for local sports groups and on-going financial support
 - significantly improve the infrastructure connectivity in this location, improving public transport to reduce the need for car travel in so far as possible, and to improve sustainable transport through increased walking, cycling and rail use
 - develop local employment opportunities in Oxfordshire
 - increase education and innovation through the provision of a sports centre of excellence and facilities linked to elite sport, community sport, health and wellbeing
 - support the County Council's net zero carbon emissions pledge through highly sustainable development
- (b) Officers to pursue discussions with a view to agreeing terms that achieve community benefit, meet Oxfordshire County Council's strategic priorities, retain OCC's reasonable long-term control,

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24 January 2023