

Statement to Kidlington Parish Council Policy & Finance Subcommittee – 3 August 2023

On 17 June 2023, KPC wrote to the County Council to express concern about aspects of the Triangle proposals. These were: parking; congestion; frequency of matches and other events; and guarantees of OUFC commitments. We commend the Council's intention to object to the proposals unless the issues it has raised are adequately addressed.

In the Chair's Report of October 2022, however, 6 key questions were set out questions, being those issues on which, KPC had decided it needed detailed, specific and concrete answers. These questions are ALL still valid. We are disappointed therefore that some of these seem to have been lost.

The first question this Council asked last October was '*does the Club really need to move*'? As you may be aware, FoSB has received legal advice that the County Council's recent consultation regarding OUFC's proposals was unlawful. It failed to provide sufficient information to enable the public to give an informed response. Not least, it avoided the very question that this Council asked last October.

FoSB has independently obtained a copy of OUFC's licence agreement. This contained a right to renew its licence until 2046. This right was not part of the new licence negotiated between OUFC and the stadium company. The public must be told why. Under the Freedom of Information Act, we obtained an email sent from the stadium company, Firoka, to the County Council. This email states (and I quote) "*has anyone bothered speaking to the stadium company to know the true situation? No... who negotiated the short licence, the football club or the stadium? The football club*".

Turning to the second question this Council asked last October, '*What benefits, sporting and other, would there be for Kidlington residents*?' We have now seen that OUFC offers incentives such as a Sports Playing Facilities Strategy and maintenance for Stratfield Brake's sports pitches. Let's be clear: CDC already has a Sports Strategy and funds are already available for pitch maintenance. Some may question what have we been paying our council tax for exactly? Should these purported benefits override the Local Plan for our area anyway? That aside, the club has a poor financial record, and residents are right to be cynical about the credibility of promises made, and whether other facilities for health and well-being will even materialise.

The Council's fourth question related to the eco-credentials of OUFC's scheme. FoSB has commissioned not one, but two ecological appraisals of the Triangle. We believe we have a far greater understanding of the ecological value of the site than the Scheme Promoter. The Club doesn't appear to have commissioned anything of this kind. This is a site which has benefitted from no public access and infrequent commercial access. The suggestion that this scheme will achieve biodiversity increase is clearly nonsense. The adjacent woodland is an important protected habitat which would be adversely affected by increased human activity in the area. As the last remaining area of Green Belt between Kidlington and Oxford the biodiversity of the Triangle is vital, and we would expect this Council to do everything in its power to protect it given the Council's commitments in this regard.

The terms of reference for this committee include "*Responses to major consultations and representing the Parish's interests to other bodies*".

QUESTIONS

In light of the above, will this Council update and/or make additional representations to Oxfordshire County Council which appropriately addresses all of the key issues which this Council has previously raised, and if not, please will this Council explain to the Parish why it believes these issues are no longer important?

In particular, does this Council agree that the consultation run by Oxfordshire County Council failed to inform the public about important relevant issues, and will this Council support FoSB's request that the consultation be re-run when proper and detailed information on these have been published?