

December 4, 2022

Letter to stakeholders providing an update on discussions between OCC and OUFC with regards to the future of their stadium.

Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford, OX1 1ND

Claire Taylor
Corporate Director
claire.taylor@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Options for a stadium for Oxford United Football Club

Dear stakeholder

I'm writing to provide an update about Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)'s discussions with Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) and their search for a future home ground.

As you may be aware, we were approached by the club last year about leasing an area of land owned by OCC at Stratfield Brake to develop a new 18,000-capacity football stadium.

Following this approach, we undertook a process of public engagement seeking views on the principle of entering discussions with the club and on the council's objectives for the use of the land. A report setting out the findings was received and considered by Cabinet in March 2022. At this meeting the Cabinet requested OUFC provide further information about their proposals and potential impacts.

OUFC provided the council with this information in early November. Officers in the property service are currently reviewing the detailed information provided and seeking clarifications from the club.

We have also encouraged OUFC to share this information with stakeholders, recognising there is a high level of interest in the proposal for a new stadium both locally and across the county.

In March, we also asked the club to look at alternative options for a location for the stadium, recognising there are considerable challenges associated with the site at Stratfield Brake. During this exercise, officers identified another potential location between Oxford and Kidlington and have offered to discuss its suitability with OUFC. This site is located south of the Kidlington roundabout, west of Banbury Road and east of Frieze Way. It is shown on the map overleaf.

The county council recognises that there are many views regarding both the future of the club and the potential impact of any new stadium. We have paid very close attention to what everyone has said to us during the public engagement period and have taken account of the concerns raised by local residents over Stratfield Brake. The potential site identified is separated from Kidlington and Gosford by two major roads, and is situated very close to Oxford Parkway railway station and the Park and Ride. The current leasing arrangement means its use would not impact community sports facilities or other parish activities. There is no current public access to this site. We remain very mindful that the site is in the green belt.

Our Cabinet reports in January and March 2022 set out a series of objectives by which any proposal for the lease of land for a new stadium would be considered. These remain essential and I repeat them here for reference:

- Maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington and 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 improving 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.

Recognising the significance of the issue and the views held locally about the long-term future of the club and its stadium, the Cabinet will be taking an in public decision about whether or not to enter into formal negotiations with OUFC with regards to the potential lease of land for the purposes of a stadium. This decision will be taken in public at a Cabinet meeting.

The forward plan of Cabinet business will be published on Tuesday 6th December 2022 and will include an agenda item for the Cabinet to make the decision and the date for this Cabinet meeting will be 24th January 2023.

As a county council we will highlight this timeframe to the local media so people across Oxfordshire are aware which Cabinet meeting will receive the recommendations and when a decision will be made.

I should also underline the fact that, while no decision has yet been taken, or view reached were OCC to decide to give in-principle support to the development of a new stadium on leased county council land, this would still be subject to the full democratic planning process by the local planning authority (Cherwell District Council).

Yours faithfully



Claire Taylor
Corporate Director – Customers, Organisational Development and Resources

