

Annex 2

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford United Football Club land negotiations

Phase one – Stakeholder engagement

Feedback report

Covering period Thursday 13 April – Friday 19 May 2023

Phase one – Stakeholder engagement

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1. Overview

- 1.1 Phase one of the council's stakeholder engagement activity, designed to help inform future decision making on its land negotiations with Oxford United Football Club (OUFC), took place between Thursday 13 April and Friday 19 May 2023.
- 1.2 The council convened 11 stakeholder meetings in total. A briefing meeting and question and answer session for county councillors with OUFC was also held.
- 1.3 All conversations were formative. Meetings proceeded on the mutual understanding that detailed information from OUFC was not yet available and that no decisions about the use of the land had been made.
- 1.4 A second phase of public engagement took place between 9 June and 23 July following the publication of information from OUFC responding to the council's seven strategic priorities.

2. Stakeholder meetings

- 2.1 The objective of the first phase of stakeholder engagement meetings was to provide a listening platform for key stakeholders to share formative views with the council regarding the use of the land at the Triangle and the potential impact of any new stadium.
- 2.2 In total, the council convened 11 stakeholder meetings. The participant list was derived from a list of community stakeholders and groups that the council has been in dialogue with since it started its non-binding negotiations with OUFC, with a small number of new stakeholders added following feedback.
- 2.3 Community stakeholders, parish councils, Oxfordshire MPs and groups were sent invitations directly, with most taking up the offer. The meetings were held either in person or online, according to the preference of the stakeholders. Each meeting lasted between 1 - 1.5 hours.
- 2.4 Council representatives met with some stakeholders and groups individually, and others collectively where it was acknowledged there was a common interest (eg sports groups).
- 2.5 The table below sets out the schedule of meetings:

Date and time	Stakeholder
Thursday 13 April	Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)
Thursday 20 April	Woodland Trust & WonderWood Oxfordshire
Friday 21 April	Local sports clubs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kidlington Youth Football Club - Gosford All Black Rugby Club - Kidlington Cricket Club - Kidlington Running Club
Monday 24 April	Oxford United Supporters Panel
Thursday 27 April	Experience Oxfordshire
Wednesday 3 May	Harbord Road Residents' Association
Wednesday 3 May	OxVOX - an independent supporters' group for OUFC

Date and time	Stakeholder
Tuesday 9 May	Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum and the Summertown & St Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum
Wednesday 17 May	Layla Moran MP
Tuesday 15 May	Kidlington Parish Council
Friday 19 May	Friends of Stratfield Brake and the Triangle

- 2.6 In advance of the meetings, all groups received the same materials, including a pre-reading presentation (see Annex A). An independent chair from the Consultation Institute facilitated the meetings and notes were formally logged by a council officer.
- 2.7 A senior council officer and a Cabinet member attended in listening capacity to hear feedback first hand. During the meetings, the council's senior officer presented a brief presentation (Annex B) reiterating some of the key information in the pre-reading materials.
- 2.8 Each meeting was structured around the questions set out below and took account of the seven strategic priorities (as worded at the time but since updated) set out by the council for the use of the land. These were as follows:
- i. Maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington.
 - ii. Improve access to nature and green spaces.
 - iii. Enhance facilities for local sports groups and on-going financial support.
 - iv. Significantly improve the infrastructure connectivity in this location, improving public transport to reduce the need for car travel in as far as possible, and improving sustainable transport through increased walking, cycling and rail use.
 - v. Develop local employment opportunities in Oxfordshire.
 - vi. Increase education and innovation through the provision of a sports centre of excellence and facilities linked to elite sport, community sport, health, and wellbeing.
 - vii. Support the county council's net zero carbon emissions pledge through highly sustainable development.

2.9 Questions used to guide discussions at the meetings were as follows:

1. *What are your initial views and thoughts about the use of the land at the triangle and the potential impact of any new stadium?*
 - a. *What did you think when you first heard about it? Good / bad - why?*
 - b. *Any immediate concerns?*
2. *Considering these seven key strategic priorities, are any more or less important to your group/organisation?*
 - a. *Why do you say that?*
 - b. *What are your concerns?*
 - c. *What are the benefits / drawbacks?*
3. *Are there any other factors you would like the council to consider?*
4. *This is the first phase of engagement, with further stakeholder and public engagement taking place in June and July. Is there anyone else you think we should be talking to?*
5. *Any other final comments? Thank and close.*

3. Key findings

- 3.1 This section summarises the main themes raised by stakeholders during meetings. Some are views from single stakeholders, whilst others are shared by several or multiple stakeholders. The detailed notes from each stakeholder meeting are included in the confidential 'OUFC stadium public and stakeholder engagement deposit', which is available in the members resource room at County Hall for all councillors to review.

1. What are your initial views and thoughts about the use of the land at the triangle and the potential impact of any new stadium?

Location

- Triangle site doesn't seem to be an appropriate shape – the piece of land seems an awkward shape that would not be big enough for the club's current plans.
- How would a triangular piece of land work for people to come in and out – how will all parts of the land be used?
- Size of the stadium underestimates capability to house multiple facilities and large amounts of people.
- Great location in terms of transport links.
- Triangle location makes grounds more accessible for people from the north of the county.
- This location represents the football team as a county football team as opposed to an Oxford City team. This location is more accessible for the whole county.
- Provides opportunity for people to explore Oxford city as part of a match day.
- Could be a landmark for Oxford – something to be proud of.
- Kassam Stadium grounds are difficult to find, triangle location is more accessible.
- Current location (Kassam Stadium) is difficult to reach for people outside of Oxford.

Transport and parking

- Concern expressed about the connectivity between Oxford city centre and the new stadium – how will this impact roads that are already congested?
- More information needed from OUFC about improved infrastructure and what that will look like in terms of facilitating public transport.
- Need further information from OUFC about the proposed bridge over Banbury Road – what are the benefits of this bridge?
- The impact of the proposed stadium on this site and increased public transport links will take over the green belt.
- How will parking be managed in the area?

- Will the stadium grounds be used for car parking and what impact will this have on local car parks?
- Will the high use of the park and ride on match days prevent shoppers or other visitors accessing the centre of the city? This could cause a decline in business for retailers unrelated to the stadium.
- Current public transport system is already strained – facilities and services need to be enhanced.
- Parking and traffic seen as a concern. Parking on grass verges/inconsiderate parking in surrounding areas was highlighted as something that will need controlling and enforcement from OUFC.
- If fans have to use public transport, it will reduce congestion and carbon emissions.
- Questions were raised about the catchment area of OUFC supporters and whether postcode data had been shared / analysed. Whilst public transport might assist supporters travel from further afield, it was questioned how people from Kidlington would travel to the site and what access and infrastructure would be in place for residents of Kidlington.
- Train and bus - opportunity for the stadium to be more accessible by public transport is very exciting.
- Travelling via public transport builds up community – you catch the train all together and it builds morale between the fans. Builds an experience even outside of the game – more of a social experience.
- People with disabilities are limited by the current travel arrangements at the Kassam stadium. The opportunity to arrive by public transport at the new stadium would provide greater accessibility.

Biodiversity and environmental impact

- The land should be prioritised to manage wildlife and nature.
- Plans need to show how woodland and the natural environment will be impacted.
- What is the club's recovery strategy for nature on the site?
- What will the football be? How will that impact existing nature on the site?
- The ancient woodland inventory and tree inventory has only 20% of cases reported. The site as is could potentially be hosting ancient woodland. An Ancient Woodland Inventory survey should be undertaken.
- What ecological surveys have been made on the site so far?
- Site is a host to underground mammal activity – this wildlife needs to be protected.
- All willow is mixed age class, all the wood in the Triangle is currently positively contributing to the environment.
- The site contributes to carbon sequestration (where carbon is stored in the natural environment) - developing on the site will cause further harmful effects to climate change.
- What will be the impacts on nature from the stadium? What is the mitigation proposed for light, noise pollution etc?

- The land should not be considered as available for lease or rent as it is already in use - the green belt should remain.
- Oxfordshire is rapidly losing countryside to development - this is changing the character of the place in a negative way.
- Site needs to show how it will integrate green corridors and access to green spaces.
- Design of the new stadium should be structured around green community spaces.
- There is the potential for solar panels to power the stadium during match/event days and provide power back into the local grid.
- Area needs access to energy infrastructure – grid distribution or plugging points for solar energy.
- The stadium needs to demonstrate a net zero building and incorporate use of eco technology to create a positive impact. Can it generate more power than it uses?
- OUFC need to demonstrate statistics in terms of ecological benefits.

Facilities and community value

- New facilities should provide greater opportunities for disabled people to actively participate in the football experience.
- Site should be considered more than just a sports facility; it should present as a multi-use facility.
- Plans should strike a balance between stadium and community facilities with a wider social impact.
- Venue should be utilised seven days a week, not just for matches.
- Suggested uses for the stadium include teaching and education, use by local sports clubs including neighbouring schools, event space, local hospitality vendors, hotels, leisure, and community access – health and education facilities.
- Stadium should mostly be used as a space to benefit the local community.
- Establish an asset that is embedded in the community, working with schools and communities.
- The stadium should be used as an opportunity for the benefit of Oxfordshire as a whole.
- The development of this site is about more than just football, it's about legacy and investing in communities.
- The current facilities are used in different ways by each sports club. The use of new land provides opportunity for better facilities for the sports groups.
- Sports teams want to know that OUFC will provide support and fair access to the sports fields, as they are currently limited in their access.
- The stadium needs to have appropriate changing facilities, particularly with the growth of female football / youth football (multi-sex facilities).
- A quality pavilion and associated facilities would increase opportunities for post-match social events. There can be 600+ people on site at any one time.

- There needs to be space for sports to co-exist, particularly as playing seasons overlap and participation in sport continues to grow.
- With an influx of people on match days, some female runners had expressed safety concerns - particularly for solo female runners.
- Wider health and wellbeing approach – establish useable green spaces and accessible exercise opportunities for locals.
- OUFC need to establish links to local NHS Integrated Care Board.
- We need to use this as an opportunity to promote healthy lifestyles. How do we create the services to enable healthy living?
- We need a health and wellbeing approach to the onsite food stalls – providing a variety of healthy options.

Design

- Materials used to make the stadium need to be eco led, with solar panels, so that it produces more energy than it uses.
- Where does the design structure physically sit within the site?
- Needs to be a net zero building.
- Design should be structured around green community spaces.

Economic impact and employment

- Good for tourism experience and for an entire day out - should be used to showcase the venues Oxfordshire has to offer.
- Development of the Triangle is seen as an enabler for investment and helps improve access to sports provision which is seen to be poor in Kidlington.
- Establish employment opportunities through the multi-use facility approach.
- Installing commercial kitchens on site and using them as a training programme for the food vendors could provide opportunity for local trainees for sporting events.
- The stadium will provide economic benefit to Kidlington, with more people shopping and staying in the area.
- Existing jobs at the Kassam Stadium should be sustained and protected at the new site.
- The possibility of accommodation on or near this site would elevate the brand and the place.

<p>2. Considering the council's seven key strategic priorities, are any more or less important to your group/organisation?</p>

- All seven priorities were considered important by all groups, although the importance ascribed to each priority varied by stakeholder group.
- It was noted there would be a need for the club to make further investment in diversity and inclusion initiatives.

3. Are there any other factors you would like the council to consider?

- Need to see more detailed plans from OUFC to better understand how the council's priorities will be addressed.
- The images used need to place OUFC's proposals in context, for example by highlighting future housing development.
- The council's initial engagement exercise (January-February 2022) was criticised for being open to all, with responses from football fans far exceeding those of residents.
- Future engagement needs to be widely publicised to local communities, with household leaflet drops.

4. This is the first phase of engagement, with further stakeholder and public engagement taking place in June and July. Who else do you think we should be talking to?

- Each group provided a suggested list of additional stakeholders. The council has reviewed this list and added additional stakeholders to the list as part of the public engagement exercise.

5. Any other final comments? Thank and close.

- Each group offered thanks for the opportunity to share their views with the council.

4. All member briefing

- 4.1 A briefing meeting for county councillors and question and answer session with OUFC took place on 17 April.
- 4.2 The representatives from OUFC were chief executive Tim Williams, director of development Jon Clarke, and head of strategy Niall McWilliams.
- 4.3 The themes covered in the questions from councillors included:
- Diversity and inclusion
 - Biodiversity
 - Transport
 - Employment opportunities
 - Contingency plans
 - Commercial considerations
 - Community facilities and investment
- 4.4 A [YouTube video of OUFC's presentation](#) is available on OUFC's website. A set of written questions and answers is available on the [county council's dedicated webpage](#).

Appendix A: Pre-meeting presentation from stakeholder meetings



Discussions with Oxford United FC about the potential use of council-owned land for a new stadium



Background

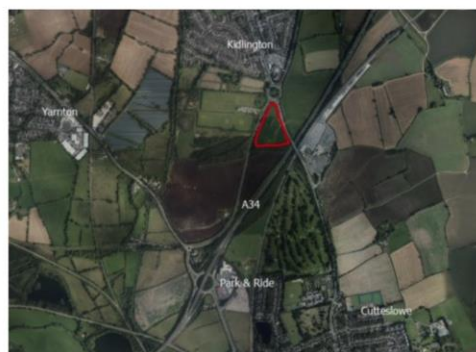
- Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) approached Oxfordshire County Council in late 2021 with a proposal to lease council-owned land near Kidlington to develop a new home stadium.
- In January 2021 the council's Cabinet resolved to undertake a public engagement exercise to understand local views and set out a series of strategic priorities that any scheme should address prior to a final decision being made.
- A council-led public engagement exercise was undertaken in January and February 2022. It received over 3,700 responses, with the list of objectives proposed by the council generally thought to be good and exhaustive. The [full report is available here](#).
- In March 2022 Cabinet agreed that officers should enter discussions with OUFC to deepen their understanding of the detailed proposals being made and consider their compatibility with the council's strategic priorities.
- OUFC published their RIBA stage 0 report in December 2022. Following consideration of the proposals, Cabinet agreed in January 2023 to enter into non-binding negotiations for a new stadium. The negotiations are currently in train.





The land

- The land, known as 'the Triangle', is located east of Frieze Way and south of the Kidlington roundabout.
- It is approximately 5 hectares in size and is situated in the green belt.
- A site at Stratfield Brake in Kidlington had initially been proposed by the club, but it was recognised there were challenges associated with it.
- Officers subsequently identified the Triangle as an alternative location and the council's Cabinet has confirmed that negotiations are about this site.
- The Triangle is close to Oxford Parkway railway station and the park and ride at Water Eaton.
- It is currently let to a single leaseholder and there is no public access.



Addressing the council's strategic priorities

For OUFC to receive agreement to lease or buy the Triangle site from the council, the club's proposal must address seven strategic priorities set out by the council for the use of the land:

1. Maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington
2. Improve access to nature and green spaces
3. Enhance facilities for local sports groups and ongoing financial support
4. Significantly improve the infrastructure connectivity in this location, improving public transport to reduce the need for car travel in so far as possible, and improve sustainable transport through increased walking, cycling and rail use
5. Develop local employment opportunities in Oxfordshire
6. Increase education and innovation through the provision of a sports centre of excellence and facilities linked to elite sport, community sport, health and wellbeing
7. Support the county council's net zero carbon emissions pledge through highly sustainable development.





The decision about the land

- A decision on whether OUFC can lease or buy the land at the Triangle will be taken in public at a Cabinet meeting.
- This is expected to be in September 2023.
- For a final decision about the development of the proposed stadium, the football club would need to submit a planning application to Cherwell District Council as the local planning authority. It would then go through a full planning process involving public consultation.



Stakeholder and public engagement

- Before making a final decision, the council has committed to seeking the views of a wide range of stakeholders, including local residents.
- During April and May the council is holding independently facilitated meetings with stakeholders to listen to people's views about the potential for a stadium.
- Once OUFC has published their scheme proposals and information relating to how the council's strategic priorities will be addressed, a six-week public engagement exercise will take place.
- The engagement exercise will be open to everyone. It is likely that it will take place between 5 June and 23 July 2023.
- It is important that our engagement activities allow a wide cross-section of views to be captured. However, we recognise that the proposals have a greater impact on local residents and communities and so we will carry out targeted promotion in this area.
- OUFC are undertaking their own community engagement activities.





Next steps and estimated timetable

23 May	Cabinet meeting setting out the final arrangements for public engagement and feedback from stakeholder engagement undertaken to date
5 June	Publication of OUFC final information regarding the proposed stadium
5 June - 23 July	Council undertakes public engagement on whether OUFC's scheme addresses the seven strategic priorities
19 September	Cabinet meeting at which a decision will be taken on the use of the land



Further information

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stadium

A webpage providing background information, definitions, timeline, links to cabinet papers and news stories.



Appendix B: In-meeting presentation from stakeholder meetings



Oxfordshire United stadium land negotiations



Site maps





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Next steps and estimated timetable

