



Web: [www.wolvercotenf.org.uk](http://www.wolvercotenf.org.uk)  
Email: [wolvercotenf@gmail.com](mailto:wolvercotenf@gmail.com)

Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum (WNF) seeks to represent the views, in relation to planning matters, of all residents in the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan area, located just 1 km south of The Triangle and stretching from the river Thames in the west to Cutteslowe Park in the east. Our Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) was approved overwhelmingly by residents in a referendum in May 2021 and was subsequently 'made' by Oxford City Council.

### **WNF comments to Cherwell District Council on planning application 24/00539/F: specifically the North Oxford VISSIM Model Scoping Report of August 2024**

WNF's Steering Committee already objected to planning application 24/00539/F because it was clear the new stadium, as described in the original application, would have damaging consequences for transport in our locality. Match days were certain to cause unacceptable congestion, delays and inconvenience to drivers on nearby roads, while spectator parking would swamp, and seriously harm the functioning of, important local car parks.

We therefore welcomed news that more detailed traffic modelling was now proposed, in the hope that this would predict more reliably the impact of events at the stadium on local transport, especially on match days.

However, these hopes were dashed by reading the Scoping Report, since the modelling it proposes contains critical flaws, meaning it will not predict the full harm the stadium will cause. In our view, the Planning Authority should not approve this planning application without knowing the full extent of the damage the stadium will inflict locally.

We therefore **OBJECT** again to planning permission being granted. In more detail, our reasons for objection are as follows.

#### **Problems with the North Oxford VISSIM Model Scoping Report**

##### **1. Ambiguity about road closures**

One of the most serious problems the stadium will cause for our Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum area is the effect on local roads of the proposed closures of Oxford Road on match days. Oxford/Banbury Road and other main roads nearby already see heavy traffic volumes. Long traffic queues are normal at the Cutteslowe and Wolvercote roundabouts. Closing Oxford Road twice on match days and diverting all its traffic along other, already very busy, roads such as Sunderland Avenue (often escaped by fast rat-running along the residential street Five Mile Drive), Wolvercote roundabout, the A44 and Frieze Way will obviously cause severe congestion. There will be a lot of stationary traffic, greatly increased journey times, bus hold-ups, traffic fumes, and driver frustration. Clearly, a critical parameter determining the level of nuisance caused will be the *duration* of the closures inflicted on Oxford Road. **But the report is ambiguous on this crucial matter.**

The background is: (1) when presenting the case for the stadium to the public prior to the planning application, OUFC predicted Oxford Road closures of 1 hour pre-match and 2 hours post-match; (2) in the OUFC planning application the proposal is for closures of “*at least*” 30 minutes.

But the Scoping Report says the closures would “*likely be implemented for 30 minutes*”. Then elsewhere it says “*the duration of the closure will be determined through the workshops*”, but without stating the criteria that will determine the duration of the closures.

Hence the report is unclear on the duration of road closures that will be input into the modelling. It provides no assurance at all that the modelling will reveal the full extent of traffic problems to be caused by the *actual* Oxford Road closures imposed when the stadium is operational.

## **2. Neglect of hold-ups caused by pedestrians crossing Oxford Road**

A problem related to **1.** above is the effective blockage of Oxford Road by large numbers of pedestrians crossing the road pre-match and post-match *outside* the periods when the road is closed.

Since there could be 16,000 spectators needing to cross Oxford Road pre-match and then again post-match, it is implausible to suggest that they will all cross the road within a narrow 30 minute time window each time. So if the road closure durations were really limited to 30 minutes (as the report says is “*likely*”), there will clearly be extended periods of time either side of the closures when the road is being continually crossed by spectators while there is also traffic on Oxford Road. These football supporters will either use the traffic lights-operated toucan crossings and thereby cause continual hold-ups to traffic, or they will cross the road *ad lib* without waiting for traffic lights, representing a major safety hazard and slowing the traffic for that reason: a recipe for chaos.

The report makes no mention of this aspect of the pre-match and post-match situations, indicating that the proposed modelling will not attempt to capture it.

## **3. Failure to model impact on nearby car parks**

Another important omission from the report is any clarity on what the modelling will reveal of the nuisance caused by spectator car parking in the neighbourhood. That will certainly impact important public car parks in the vicinity, other car parks accessible to the public nearby (e.g. at Sainsbury’s and at Stratfield Brake) and all residential streets within walking distance of the stadium. OUFC’s choice of a site so small as The Triangle means the stadium site itself will not provide ANY general car parking for spectators (compared to the 1,985 spaces at the Kassam stadium). The obvious consequence will be inundation of all public parking near the Triangle on match days.

Most impacted will be the two public car parks nearest the stadium, just across the Oxford Road: (1) Oxford Parkway Park and Ride car park (of vital importance for functioning of the Oxford City park and ride scheme), and (2) Oxford Parkway Station car park (of vital importance for railway passengers arriving by car). Both of these are less than half the size of the Kassam stadium car park. There is a clear need to know how badly the operations of these car parks will be affected, and the disruption to the Oxford Park and Ride scheme and to railway passengers needing to park, that match days will cause.

However, the report does not indicate any attempt will be made to quantify the problems posed to these car parks on match days. The report even reveals ignorance of how these two car parks function at present. It refers (on P.30) to "*Oxford Parkway car park*" whereas in reality there is no car park with such a name. Is it referring to (1) or (2), or both?

One of the scenarios to be modelled (Scenario 3.2) envisages "*management at Oxford Parkway car park*". But the meaning of that is unclear. The implication from elsewhere in the report is that it refers to the *closing* of this car park (whichever it is) to spectators. But that is implausible because no-where has OUFC ever provided a public explanation of how it could prevent members of the public from parking in a public car park.

There have previously been suggestions from OUFC that shuttle buses would be provided on match days from other Park and Ride sites. An obvious candidate for this would be the Pear Tree Park and Ride car park, which is a short distance from the Triangle. So there is a clear danger that the functioning of this Park and Ride car park, too, could be threatened by being overwhelmed by spectator parking on match days, especially if OUFC find a way of preventing parking at Parkway.

The report provides no indication at all that the modelling will address any of these potential problems for nearby car parks.

#### **4. Failure to incorporate effects of other local changes expected**

The North Oxford VISSIM model as described in the report will incorporate expected effects on traffic of numerous other local developments either under way already or being planned. These effects have been themselves predicted by modelling, so there is inevitable uncertainty about the accuracy of them, that will add to uncertainty about the reliability of the new modelling of the impact of the stadium. This is amply revealed in the report by the scale of the 'Uncertainty Log' which lists 20 new developments that are not yet in place at the time of the 2024 base model, so none of their actual impacts can yet be known.

However, a bigger cause for concern is the failure of the proposed modelling to incorporate several known factors that will impinge on local roads and parking in the near future. This again will cause the modelling to under-predict the severity of the impact of the stadium.

One factor is the expected increase in demand for parking spaces by rail passengers at Oxford Parkway Station car park when East West Rail Phase 2 (trains between Oxford and Bletchley/Milton Keynes) comes into operation in 2025. Use of the car park by football spectators is implied in the report (but subject to ambiguity – see above). But the consequences of this change are neglected in the report.

Other important factors are highway changes proposed for Oxford City in the near future by Oxfordshire County Council (except for the traffic filters proposal, which the report claims will be incorporated in modelling). These factors are: (1) introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy within the city; and (2) major expansion of the Zero Emission Zone. Both will reduce the use of cars within the city, and are intended to do so. They will therefore lead to more visitors and commuters using the Park and Ride scheme, and therefore add to pressure on parking spaces at the Park and Ride car parks at Oxford Parkway and at Pear Tree.

The report makes no mention of these significant additional factors, indicating that the modelling will neglect them, and will further under-predict adverse impacts that the new stadium will have on local traffic and parking.

For all these reasons, the Scoping Report shows the proposed VISSIM modelling strategy to be inadequate, and incapable of predicting the full severity of the impact that the stadium will have on local traffic and parking.

From Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum Steering Committee, 10 October 2024

Paul Buckley, John Bleach, Richard Lawrence-Wilson, Mary Brown, Austen Cook, Tony Dale, Louise Franklin, Katherine Kaye