

Date: 12 October 2023
Our Ref:
Your Ref:

Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND

Tim Williams
CEO
Oxford United Football Club Ltd

Cllr Dan Levy
Cabinet Member for Finance

Dear Tim,

Re: Proposed Lease of the Triangle

The cabinet of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) met on 19 September 2023 and considered a report from officers relating to your proposal to acquire from OCC the area of land known as the Triangle. It delegated to the Cabinet Member for Finance to write to you setting out the council's requirements relating to the commitments you made in your proposals to us.

The resolution of cabinet was to agree to grant a leasehold to the Triangle only if Oxford United Football Club Ltd (OUFC) met the following requirements:

- i. The receipt of planning consent
- ii. The production by OUFC of a net zero carbon plan fully costed with clear timescales and outcomes, from design, construction and full operation of the stadium
- iii. A clear and detailed set of proposals that show how OUFC will meet the commitments made to date to meet the Council's strategic priorities to the satisfaction of the Cabinet Member for Finance.

In addition, cabinet agreed that a leasehold agreement would be subject to the following:

- iv. Obtaining a best value assessment of the leasehold disposal in accordance with the requirements of s123 Local Government Act 1972
- v. Restrictive covenants to ensure that the land remains limited to use for stadium and sports purposes for the term of the lease.

Members of cabinet felt this was a suitable approach, taking account the views expressed by those living locally to the Triangle site that OUFC had not yet fully addressed OCC's priorities. We were pleased to note in your public response that you welcomed this cabinet decision. We now want to work collaboratively with you to ensure that these requirements – which are not negotiable – are met so that we can realise the shared objective of a community stadium of which we can all be proud.

Clear and detailed set of proposals

As part of your work to prepare a planning application, you have made clear that you intend to undertake further detailed work during the design phase that will set out how you will deliver the commitments you have made. We would like to confirm our expectations around these commitments. This is particularly important as a number of your commitments exceed the statutory requirement that will otherwise be assessed during the planning process.

For the avoidance of doubt, we require you to demonstrate these commitments separately from the planning process – indeed, as set out above, obtaining planning permission was one of five conditions that the cabinet placed on signing any leasehold agreement.

In Annex A, we have listed the commitments you made in four documents submitted to the council in June 2023 and which formed the basis of our public engagement exercise in June and July 2023. These documents are i) a summary document (Overview and summary of OUFC documents submitted to Oxfordshire County Council); ii) Stand United; iii) New Stadium Development Project Vision; and iv) Community Pledge.

In your presentations to us at cabinet, you made clear that a motivation for the new stadium was to put the women's team on an equal footing with the men's team. We welcome that aspiration and expect your proposals to demonstrate a clear commitment to gender equality across all your provisions.

We will now need you to produce a clear and detailed set of proposals that show how OUFC will meet these commitments, including timelines and key milestones. The cabinet agreed in principle to grant the club a leasehold, but this relies upon your meeting our requirements.

Our intention is to avoid any surprises. By stating our requirements now, we want to give you the greatest opportunity to meet them. However, we also wish to underscore that any leasehold agreement is subject to the club producing detailed proposals to the satisfaction of the Cabinet Member for Finance.

Net zero plan

A further condition required by cabinet is the production of a credible and fully costed net zero carbon plan for the design, building and operation of the stadium. Some of the elements we would expect to see in this are reflected in the commitments set out in Annex A. There are other elements that need to be covered, however, and we have set out the full list in Annex B.

Leasehold agreement covenant

We also resolved at the cabinet meeting that, in any future leasehold agreement, there would be a covenant/covenants on the use of the land that would stipulate that it could only be used for a stadium principally for sports purposes and that the only other activity permitted on the site would be ancillary services within the curtilage of the stadium building.

Finally, we would like to inform you that, as we have not undertaken a best value assessment of the Triangle in relation to a leasehold disposal, the property team at OCC will need to arrange this as soon as possible.

We think it is important for you and your contractors to have the opportunity to ask questions of us to ensure there is no doubt about our requirements. To this end, we would be happy to offer a meeting with senior officers, at your convenience, to review these requirements.

Following that, we expect to publish an agreed timetable for you to provide evidence of meeting our requirements. We will review progress towards that regularly and publish the progress so that we are both accountable for ensuring these requirements are met.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Dan Levy
Cabinet Member for Finance

Cllr Calum Miller
Former Cabinet Member for Finance