



Comedy actor Geoffrey Palmer, who lives at The Lee, near Great Missenden, signs the petition on Saturday, watched by John Camp, chairman of the health authority, Pat Micklewright, administrator, and Roy Derby, general manager. His was one of 3,500 signatures collected in High Wycombe during Saturday.

Soccer ground rethink decided

MORE than 27,000 people have signed the petition calling on Wycombe District Council to save Loakes Park for Wycombe Hospital. And this mammoth public support may have paid off already, because talks have started which may produce a compromise solution.

Faced with intense public pressure, Wycombe Wanderers' Football Club has asked the property developers, Westbruton, to talk to the hospital authorities about the future of Loakes Park.

Westbruton wants to build two DIY warehouses on the site, whereas the hospital says it is the only means of expanding and providing more wards for the elderly.

Both had submitted planning applications to the council, but these will not now be considered at the March 5 meeting of the Planning Committee.

Tempting

Both applications remain on the table to await the outcome of joint talks. It is possible that at a later date both sides will withdraw their applications in favour of an alternative plan for Loakes Park, which would satisfy all parties, the developers, the health authorities and the football club.

Wycombe Wanderers have stressed all along that they have never offered their ground to anyone, but that Westbruton approached them with a tempting financial deal.

The football club's only asset is its ground, which it would sell to pay for a move to a new pitch at Sands, and a climb into top league football.

A spokesman for Wycombe Council said that with the situation in a state of flux it was difficult to comment at this stage.

"But it was clearly the most suitable way forward to consider all the possible alternatives at one meeting, the date of which would be some way off.

Meanwhile, the protest petition, which was collected in only three weeks, has been handed into Wycombe's Council's planning department this week.

"The people of the district have given us magnificent support," said general manager Roy Derby.