



Getting the Wasps buzz: Wasps chief executive Alistair McLean and Blues chief executive Simon Monkman at Adams Park on Wednesday

Wasps say yes to Blues

WANDERERS have fought off competition from Oxford United to stage top-flight rugby at Adams Park and will groundshare with Wasps next season if the council gives them the green light on Monday.

The Free Press can exclusively reveal that the Wasps board have voted in favour of moving to Wycombe despite an impressive late bid from Oxford.

The two-year-deal, which is worth £1 million to Wanderers, now depends on the council granting planning permission at Monday's specially convened meeting of the development control committee.

Wasps' new chief executive

DAVE PETERS
GROUNDSHARE

Alistair McLean told the Free Press: "Subject to council approval it is a done deal. We want to come to Wycombe."

The two clubs have agreed a 29-page tenancy agreement - with the option of an extension.

And they are confident they will win council approval this time after originally being refused a certificate of lawfulness to hold rugby and being ordered to submit a full planning application instead.

The whole scheme now hinges on a comprehensive Green Travel Plan which the club will hand into the council

offices today.

Chris Swanwick, the council's director of planning and major projects, said: "The determining issue is going to be the measures contained in that Travel Plan. It will have to overcome the very real concerns expressed by the highway authorities and the residents about the problems experienced on matchdays."

The two clubs are optimistic that the travel plan they have devised has helped erase many of the residents' worries about parking and congestion on Wasps Sundays.

Wanderers and Wasps held what is being described as a 'very constructive' meeting at Adams Park on Tuesday night with the nearby Sands

Residents Association, which has objected to the groundshare plan.

Wasps intend to bus fans in from their traditional London heartland while there will be cash incentives for car-sharing as well as an innovative telephone text message service for fans to arrange travel to games.

The BFP's own market research suggests there is enough support from the councillors to vote it through.

Blues chief executive Simon Monkman said: "It will be tremendous for the town and the two clubs if we get the decision we want on Monday."

"I'm confident that the councillors fully appreciate how sincere and how hard

we've worked to bring this deal to fruition and if the decision doesn't go our way, I can honestly think of nothing else we could have done."

Wanderers have also agreed to hold regular meetings with the Sands Residents Association whether or not Wasps arrive.

McLean said: "We're very excited about Wycombe. We see Wycombe as being the perfect marriage for us."

"Bucks is the very heart of our academy. A huge chunk of the players from our U21 and U19 teams come from this area and it is a strong rugby area."

And he reckons Wasps can take off at Adams Park.

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Million pound deal rests with the council

Continued from back.

McLean said: "Wycombe has always been our preferred destination and the only reason we considered Oxford was because of the hiccup in planning."

Wasps officials have spent three days at Adams Park this week and McLean said: "We'd be very disappointed if planning permission doesn't go our way."

"I believe we've done our

best to put many of the Sands residents fears to rest. I think the local residents and the people of Wycombe will enjoy rugby being played here."

Wasps arrival would be a financial lifeline for the Blues. They have lost £366,000 from the collapsed ITV Digital deal and gambled £500,000 on a new pitch for Wasps.

If Blues are granted permission, it has been recommended for two years

only and the clubs will have to sign a legally binding document promising to implement the travel plan.

The planners will also decide whether Wanderers can retain their upper tier car park and keep their club shop.

● The BFP will be holding back its Midweek deadline in a bid to get the result of the meeting in Tuesday's paper. It will also be on our website at www.bucksfreepress.co.uk

Sport comment

Council must grab the chance

THERE should only be one way to vote at the council's planning meeting on Monday and that's to allow Wasps to play at Adams Park.

There are far too many benefits for the communities of Wycombe and surrounding areas to pass up this opportunity to bring top class sport and world class players into the area.

Councils and communities can take years to try and build a good professional team - it took more than 100 years for Wanderers to get into the Football League.

Rugby enthusiasts will be able to watch great rugby being played.

Youngsters, with a first class team on their doorstep, might be encouraged to take up the sport.

And schools, already reaping the benefits of Wasps in the community, will be having more visits by top players and have great coaching lessons.

Yes there are problems, not least the traffic difficulties experienced by Sands residents.

They deserve a proper transport plan to ensure Wasps - and Wanderers fans - come by public transport and do not clog up the local roads.

But Monday's meeting, after these problems are discussed, should come down on the side of Wasps or the chance of a lifetime will be lost.