

7,000 have their say on plans

MORE than 7,000 people have now responded to the public consultation on plans for a new stadium and sports village for Wycombe Wanderers and London Wasps.

The figure was just 2,000 at the start of last week but councillor Tony Green, the deputy leader of Wycombe District Council, said coverage in the *Bucks Free Press* and the activities of various lobby groups had helped push the number up.

He added: "It's been a very high profile consultation. We are very pleased because all through this we've wanted to get as big a response as possible."

A row broke out over the consultation last week after Liberal Democrat councillors said an email sent out by

Wanderers and Wasps would 'skew' the results.

The clubs' email urged people to take part and added: "Please join us and back Booker now". It also included a link to the council website and instructions to "select option D 'sports village'" and "When you go to Question 4, select the option for Wycombe Air Park".

The clubs announced last month that Wycombe Air Park in Booker is their preferred option for the stadium. The council has said the announcement would hold 'no sway' over the public consultation.

Lib Dem Trevor Snaith, a Wycombe district councillor, said the email 'tactics' were similar to those used by cam-

paigners who wanted Holywell Mead swimming pool to reopen.

After a previous consultation into the future of the swimming pool site, council bosses said the results could not be relied upon because it had been "hijacked" by campaigners.

Midweek asked the council if the consultation results for the stadium would also be treated with caution, following the email from the clubs.

Spokesman Catherine Spalton said: "We would hope that people have made their own decisions and submitted their comments about the Wycombe Community Stadium and Sports Project based on the information that is available."

When asked if the council was concerned about the emails from Wanderers and Wasps, Cllr Green said in a statement: "As with any consultation... we are aware that a number of interested parties have been encouraging their members to support a particular position when responding to the consultation."

Wycombe Sports Developments Ltd, which sent out the emails for Wanderers and Wasps, said: "It is right and proper that we make our voices heard so that the stadium and sports village proposal can progress to the next stage of design and further consultation."

For the latest local news
bucksfreepress.co.uk



CAMPAIGN: A young fan joins the leafleting on Saturday
WY53338-P16

'It's a family club and that's what we're going to lose'

ANTI-stadium campaigners stepped up their protests with a leaflet campaign outside Adams Park on Saturday.

Hundreds of 'No To Booker' leaflets were handed out to fans making their way to Wanderers' match at home to Lincoln City.

But Matt Clarke, who organised the campaign, said stewards took his remaining leaflets from him as he

made his way to the ground, although they were returned afterwards.

Mr Clarke, who helped set up the 'No To Booker' protest group, said: "I was disappointed."

"We've been entirely peaceful and engaging with people. We weren't trying to cause problems - there was no plan to hand out leaflets in the ground. We are all fans and don't want to do anything that leads to the club banning us."

"The stewards were perfectly polite and said I wouldn't be allowed to take them into the ground."

But he said the turnout of support against the planned move away from Adams Park had been "amazing" and spelt out the appeal Wycombe Wanderers has in the community. He said: "My son, who's ten, is handing out leaflets. I've supported Wycombe for 30 years and when he gets to my age, I want him to be able to say: 'This is my club, I have campaigned for it and I believe in what was done all those years ago'."

"There are young guys through to people in their 60s - that's the appeal of Wycombe. It's a family club, and that's what we are going to lose."

A council-led consultation over the plans closed on Friday. Mr Clarke said: "People are welcome to their own opinion and we want to show both sides of the argument, not just one saying 'Wouldn't it be great having this stadium?'"

"We're not here to oppose anything but there are a lot of people who don't feel represented and feel scared about what's going on." He added: "If it's shown we are wrong, we will throw everything behind Steve Hayes. But until these fundamental questions are answered, we won't."

Last week the Wycombe Wanderers Supporters' Trust announced it would oppose the proposal in its current form.



OPPOSITION: Councillor Darren Hayday, right, handing out 'No to Booker' leaflets to Wanderers fans
WY53338-P07

"There's got to be something for the supporters' Trust to come out and say that," said Mr Clarke. "I'm more and more confident we will make an impact and do our best to safeguard our club."

Joining campaigners was Wycombe District Councillor Darren Hayday, who is standing down at next year's elections in protest at the proposed new stadium.

Dressed in a Wycombe Wanderers shirt, Cllr Hayday, who represents Booker and Cresssex, said he "didn't need any persuading" to join in the leaflet hand-out.

He said: "I'm totally against the move to Booker and I'm glad there are so many people down here joining in the protest."

● Club owner Steve Hayes said last week in an email to a fan questioning him on the proposals: "I would just ask for some understanding for now about the early state of the process we are in and I would refer you to the statement we issued in response to the [Supporters'] Trust, where I stated publicly that the WWFC financial position would be improved as a result and that a move to a new community stadium at Booker would support the club's aspirations to be a Championship team."

"We still have a long way to go before any of this becomes a reality, including more consultation. We need to see the response to the council's consultation and confirmation of a potential site and in the meantime I would ask yourself and any colleagues not to rule out a move which could deliver fantastic facilities and put the club in a sustainable financial footing."



JUST SAY NO: Blues fans opposing the stadium plans
WY53338-P06



Interested in Fostering?

We are currently recruiting **Foster Carers**, from various backgrounds, across Buckinghamshire and surrounding areas. We need Carers to provide family placements to children and young people and also Carers that could provide placements for a young parent and their baby/child.

We can offer you:

- A placement fee up to £400 per week per young person placed
- 24 hour support from qualified staff
- Regular monthly training workshops
- NVQ Level 3 funding
- Your own supervising social worker
- Respite care placements

To be a foster carer you **don't** have to own your own home, be married or in a relationship, or even have children of your own. You **do** need to have enthusiasm, energy and a spare bedroom and be committed to caring for children and young people.

To find out more about fostering call Linda Bennett or Rachel Beasley on **01908 286644**

www.futures-for-children.org

'I still enjoy the matchday experience'

MIKE Brooks of Wycombe Sports Development Ltd, provided *BFP Midweek* (October 26) with the most interesting justification yet of need to leave Adams Park; namely that "the existing dug outs are too small".

Readers will make up their own minds about the degree of desperation this shows, but I want to comment on the state of Adams Park, lest those readers who don't know it get the impression that it is some kind of sports hovel.

The ground is a mere 20 years old (with the biggest stand built only in 1996). It is well constructed and views of the pitch are excellent. As a Wanderers season ticket holder, I still enjoy the ground and the "matchday experience" that Mike Brooks and Steve Hayes are so keen to talk down. In fact, I can't be the

only one, since the club won the 2010 Football League Family Excellence Award and the Wycombe District Council's Deputy Leader Tony Green is quoted on its website as saying that "Adams Park is renowned as a family friendly stadium".

The truth is, of course, that Adams Park is a good, modern facility; the envy of many of Wanderers' and Wasps' rivals. It is more than adequate to accommodate Wanderers, who never fill it, and Wasps, who rarely do. With just a little of the energy and funds apparently available for a new stadium, any deficiencies could be easily remedied.

And at a time of almost unprecedented public spending cuts, there is



ADAMS PARK: Are the existing dug outs too small?

therefore no justification for the council providing public funding to support a multi-millionaire's out-of-town development which will suck business and life out of Wycombe's centre and concrete over an important green space.

Chris Watts
Thornton Crescent
Wendover