

Plans for pub

A PLANNING application has been submitted to the council asking for permission to demolish The Green Man pub in Flackwell Heath and replace it with a Sainsbury's. The documents were submitted to Wycombe District Council on Monday, outlining plans to pull down the pub in Straight Bit and construct two retail units, including a Sainsbury's Local store. Two objections have already been made against the plans, including from the owner of a shop in the village. The council has set March 7 as a target determination date.

Smell at store

AN unpleasant smell has been lingering in the air at Tesco's in Princes Risborough for the last few days but bosses say it is nothing to worry about. Spokesman for Tesco, Rory Stoves, said there has been a "slight issue" with a pump that is underneath the store. He said nothing is coming onto the site and it is not directly linked to the store. Management at the store were hoping engineers would be out to look at the problem yesterday and that it will be fixed as soon as possible.

Clashes over public spending

Proposals to bring community stadium's £750k investment to a halt is rejected

THE alternative to investigating a new 'community' stadium is "to live in mud huts", a councillor said this week, as clashes over public spending on the project intensified.

A Liberal Democrat proposal to bring a halt to the £750,000 consultation investment, earmarked by Wycombe District Council, was rejected at a scrutiny committee meeting.

But councillors will have to justify the cash again later in the process as part of recommendations made to cabinet members.

Passions ran high as the motion was debated.

Lib Dem Leader Cllr Steve Guy asked, with impending cuts to hit services this year, how WDC could continue spending on a "speculative" venture.

Councillor James Malliff, Tory, criticised the Lib Dems' standpoint and said: "As a Tory we're all about delivering value for money. If we are spending money it has to be for the best reason and this is it."

He said £750,000 was 'almost immaterial' in relation to the council's £120 million budget.

"People may think it's a contentious point but in percentage terms it's fractional. I think this money is very well spent," he said.

Cllr Trevor Snaith argued the money should not be 'frittered away', adding "we're spending money on a



LIB DEMS: Cllrs Trevor Snaith and Steve Guy. Cllr Snaith says the council are spending money on a 'dead duck'

Cllr Guy, who used to work for one of the multi-millionaire's companies, said Mr Branson would not invest in a stadium because it would be 'too risky'.

He questioned why the capital budget could not have been used

refurbishing Holywell Mead or Bassetsbury Manor instead. Conservative Cllr Darren Hayday

dead duck."

Cllr Simon Bazley blasted him, saying he did not appear to understand the difference between revenue budgets – which comes from council tax – and capital budgets for 'bricks, mortar and buildings'.

He claimed the meeting had become the "Cllr Guy and Cllr Snaith show".

In a passionate defence of the council's actions an "astounded" Cllr Ron Gaffney, said: "Sometimes you have to spend money to make money."

"Sometimes you lose, sometimes you win, the alternative is to do nothing and live in mud huts."

Otherwise the Eden shopping centre and the Swan Theatre, may never have happened, he said.

He also added he wished Richard Branson could hear the discussion.

Key points going forward

THE £750K QUESTION

The council has long insisted, contrary to critics' claims, this money has not come from council taxpayers.

The £750,000 budget comes from WDC's capital programme.

Up to £500,000 is being used to cover the cost of the planning process.

Feasibility/project work up costs up to £250,000 – which has been match-funded by Wycombe Sports Development Limited.

£20,000 has been spent on the public consultation.

The £750k was generated through a mixture of WDC's property activities and investment income.

According to local authority financing rules, capital monies cannot be used to pay for revenue and outgoings, nor to reduce council tax.

CABINET MEETING

Will take place on Monday at WDC offices in Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe. The public can attend.

The cabinet will consider:

A) The consultation results, report and its recommendations.

B) Recommendations from the scrutiny committee.

If cabinet members decide to move forward with the project, this would pave the way to begin preparations for a planning application.

IMPROVEMENT AND REVIEW COMMISSION

WDC's scrutiny committee met on Wednesday night.

It voted not to support the motion that was proposed by Cllr Steve Guy to halt the spending of

said it should not be a political debate and argued the clubs should be financing the venture themselves without council involvement.

He said: "I basically agree with Cllrs Guy and Snaith that we should pull the plug, it should've been pulled a long time ago and I'm embarrassed. I know it will upset some of my colleagues but I don't care."

Cllr Paul Rogerson said it would be "wrong" to put handcuffs on the council, even if he was dubious about the plans.

The only councillors to support the Lib Dem motion were Cllr Margaret Draper, Labour; Cllr Hayday, Tory, and Cllr Ray Farmer, Lib Dem.

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£750,000 earmarked for the project.

About one third has so far been spent.

However the commission made a recommendation to council that once spending reaches £500,000 on this project, there will be a report back to council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE IMPROVEMENT AND REVIEW COMMISSION

A key recommendation of the scrutiny commission was to hold a full structured public discussion in a 'public inquiry' style – if cabinet decides to proceed on Monday.

These would happen probably in four evening sessions over two weeks. The public and interested parties would have the platform to speak, as they would at a planning committee meeting.

The findings would be reported to cabinet and inform whether to proceed with a planning application.

Green Belt

Further work must be carried out to show very special circumstances exist that override green-belt and AONB policies.

Air Park

Concerns remain about the limitations of the space at the Air Park.

Commitment

"The need for a clear and irrevocable commitment from Wycombe Wanderers FC and London Wasps be obtained, backed by a legal agreement, to support the council's intent and to ensure a long-term legacy for the district"

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Take part in our Bucks Free Press survey next week

THE Bucks Free Press will hold its own independent survey next week over the controversial plans for a new stadium and

sports village.

Pick up of next Friday's edition of the BFP to discover how you can have your say.



‘I’m very upset by the stadium business’

■ Two ex-Tory mayors break ranks with their party and speak against plan

A SENIOR Conservative councillor has broken ranks with her party and spoken out against the proposed stadium at Wycombe Air Park saying she must follow her conscience, even if it means she is sacked.

Wycombe District Councillor and cabinet member Jean Teesdale, who represents Lane End, said she fully supports her constituents and leader of WDC Lesley Clarke can sack her if she wants.

And Cllr Val Razzaq, pictured left, announced this week she is quitting politics after becoming ‘very disillusioned’ over the stadium plan.

Cllr Teesdale, who is cabinet member for Planning and Sustainability, has been told by cabinet she must abstain from the vote about the next stage of the stadium on Monday night because of her strategic role.

She said: “I have got some grave concerns about this stadium and so because of that I will be abstaining on Monday night. I can’t support going forward with this particular project.”

As planning member she said she cannot put it through and someone else will have to. She said she “refuses” to take it through cabinet.

The former Mayor of High Wycombe added: “I am very worried about what it is going to do to people in the area. I think it could decimate that area.”

Regarding Monday night’s meeting she said: “I

don’t intend to resign. It is entirely up to Lesley Clarke if she wants to sack me – that is up to her. I can only do what my conscience tell me. I am first and foremost there to represent the people of Lane End and their views.”

In October last year WDC Tory Cllr Darren Hayday said he will not stand at the next election after he became disillusioned with the stadium plans.

Cllr Teesdale and Ian McEnnis, who also represents the Chiltern Rise ward, conducted a survey in Lane End about the stadium over the Christmas period.

The survey asked where householders would like, if any, a stadium to be placed. 311 voted for it to stay at Adams Park, 18 for it to move to Wycombe Air Park, nine to Abbey Barn South and 20 gave no support to a stadium.

Cllr McEnnis said he fully supports Lane End and he shall be making a statement on Monday night, also on Cllr Teesdale’s behalf.

Cllr McEnnis said he thought the consultation was “flawed” but that the Conservative members are not being whipped and they all have their own conscience.

Cllr Razzaq, also a former mayor, who represents Booker and Cressex, will stand down



CONCERNS: Cllr Teesdale

at the upcoming May elections after eight years as a councillor.

She said: “I’m not standing for re-election, I’m very upset by the stadium business. I don’t know why it has gone so far as this.”

She said she and Cllr Hayday had been receiving 40 emails per day and letters from as far as Marlow, Frieth and Beaconsfield about the stadium.

Cllr Razzaq said she had come to feel “very disillusioned” with politics and was

“saddened” she and Cllr Hayday had not had support from other council members over the issue.

Her late husband Mohammed Razzaq, also a former Mayor, would have been “proud” of her, she added.

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Consultation fact box



ADAMS PARK: The current ground got 14 per cent of votes

WYCOMBE District Council received 8,376 responses to the six-week public consultation over plans for a community stadium and sports village.

74 per cent (6201 votes) backed plans for the project to be built at Wycombe Air Park, Booker – of which, almost half (31.71 per cent) of all responses were made up by people from outside the Wycombe District.

Adams Park received 14 per cent (1232 votes) of all respondents.

Option D for a full Sports Village gained support from 71 per cent (5947 responses) of those that took part. Option A, Retain Adams Park and seek improvements, got 14.74 per cent (1235 votes) of all respondents.

The Cabinet report lists concerns from respondents over the consultation process, transport, the council’s financial input, Wycombe Air Park as the ‘best’ site, the effect the project may have on the Green Belt and issues surrounding Wycombe Wanderers and London Wasps.

But the report states: “There is a message emerging from the consultation that the project represents a real opportunity for the district.”

The report will be presented to members of the Cabinet at 6pm on Monday at the council chamber in WDC’s Queen Victoria Road offices.

Members will be advised to take the project to the next stage and “proceed by means of a ‘departure’ planning application”.

See last Tuesday’s Midweek and bucksfreepress.co.uk for full reports on the consultation.

‘Serious questions’ about process

THE chairman of Lane End Parish Council has accused the stadium consultation process of being “corrupted”, at a meeting this week.

Cllr Graeme Coulter spoke about the results of the public consultation on the Wycombe Community Stadium which were published last week by Wycombe District Council.

It showed a majority were in favour of the stadium and sports village and in favour of the stadium at Wycombe Air Park in Booker.

He told the meeting: “Voting patterns raise serious questions about the extent to which the consultation process has been corrupted. I won’t call it corrupt but corrupted. I don’t think it reflects in any way public opinion.”

Cllr Coulter said “we are all aware” Wycombe Wanderers’ Football club, Wasps and the university encouraged voting in the constituencies within their influence.

He said a Freedom of Information request was made for full list of responses made by individuals which WDC co-operated with and those individual responses are being looked at.

The parish council has also requested a copy of the electoral register to see if they can relate the individual responses with the register but WDC has refused to make the register available, although it did say it could have the

register for the Lane End Parish.

Spokesman for WDC Catherine Spalton said: “We had a request for a copy of the electoral register for the whole district from the clerk of the Parish Council. They were told that parish councillors are entitled to a copy of the electoral register for their parish only and that this request should be made directly to the Democratic Services Team Leader. (For reference, district councillors are only entitled to a copy of the electoral register for their ward.)

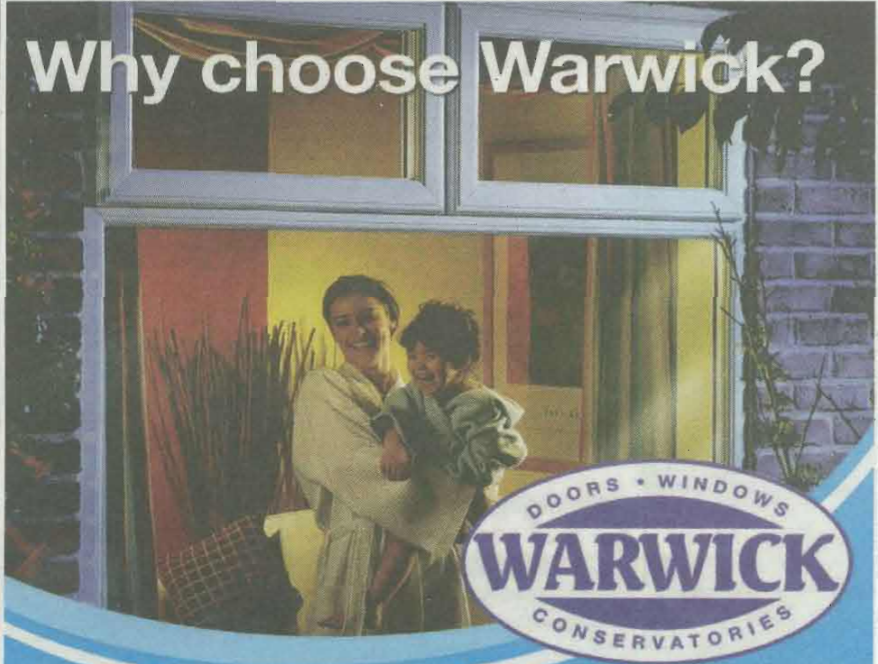
“A copy of the full register is available for inspection, on request, at our offices.”

Cllr Mike Detsiny said polls on the *Bucks Free Press* website showed a very different response than the consultation received, as did the survey carried out by Wycombe District councillors Jean Teesdale and Ian McEnnis in Lane End, which showed about 90 per cent wanted the stadium to stay at Adams Park.

The results of the consultation will go to full cabinet meeting on Monday when the next stage will be discussed.

● The ‘GASP’ (Groups Against the Stadium Proposals) protest group will be staging a demonstration outside the council offices in High Wycombe on Monday from 5.30pm to 6.30pm

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THIS WEEK'S TALKING POINT: CONSULTATION OVER PROPOSED STADIUM

These questions must be answered for the public

HAVING looked at the analysis of responses to the WDC consultation on the Stadium Project, several questions arise.

Why is it that some organisations record multiple responses (e.g. Bucks New University: 55 responses) whereas others, such as the Marlow Society, the High Wycombe Society and all of the parish councils who responded, are shown as having made only one response?

Is it that organisations were able to get several of their members to record responses in their name, and maybe also as individuals? And why is it that some organisations seem to have multiple identities, presumably allowing them additional responses. For instance, versions of the Wycombe Wanderers name appear in the list six times: Wycombe Wanderers FC (eight responses); London Wasps and Wycombe Wanderers FC (one response); WWFC and London Wasps (two responses); WWFC (seven responses); Wycombe Wanderers

Community Trust (eight responses) and Bucks New Uni and Wycombe Wanderers FC (one response). It is important that questions such as these are answered so that the public can have confidence that the process has not been biased in favour of a particular conclusion.

Derek Done, pictured below, Harwood Road, Marlow

Editor's note: Wycombe District Council says: "Responses received from some organisations contained a mix of a formal response from the relevant organisation and responses from individuals who stated the organisation they worked for, but then went on to give their personal views about the project."

Response was so poor

DUE to the poor response to the consultation with only 8,376 people replying I would declare these results null and void.

This is especially the case as about half of the responses came from outside the district and pay no taxes to the council.

Therefore if 4,150 people have replied from a district population, according to the census of 2001 of 92,300, then only about 4.5% of the residents of the district have taken an interest.

Arguably it is the case then that only 3% of the population of the Wycombe district have voted in favour of Wycombe Air Park.

For such a project to be undertaken at such cost and with so much upheaval I would expect a majority to be in favour, not just 3%.

Christopher Wood (Long-distance Wycombe Wanderers fan), Cardiff
LET us not miss this

Why Wycombe does need a sports village

unique opportunity to deliver a Sports Village for Wycombe!

A number of sports in the Wycombe district have come together as Wycombe Sports Village Group (WSVG) as we firmly believe that a Sports Village could be of great benefit to Wycombe. That is of benefit for our local community, schools, youth and disadvantaged people, as well as our club and league players. A Sports Village will complement a Community Stadium, it will be a great destination and iconic facility that will enhance our district.

With a critical mass of sports working together we have already identified that we can deliver breadth, depth and excellence for badminton, cricket, cycling, hockey, table tennis and an ever growing number of sports are interested in working with us. This directly benefits a significant number of people within our district on an ongoing basis. We have already engaged with and received a great deal of support and expertise from Sport England and our National Governing bodies.

They have committed to help deliver our vision and some funding will come from them, as well as our local sport organisations.

We understand the need for enabling development to raise the initial funding for the new facility. Our initial findings show that once a village is built our individual sports will be self-sufficient on an ongoing

basis, but our findings also show that, like the stadium, we will need some support in the initial build and fit-out stage. If done well the Sports Village is a real investment in the future for us and our children and offer sporting and financial returns to the district.

Each sport will be in control of its own area, sporting strategy and delivery, but by bringing the sports together at a common site we can achieve the critical mass that allows increased participation by all, but especially young people.

The sharing of common facilities will maximise usage and reduce costs. Additionally delivering a central pool of professionals, coaches and volunteers for all sport allows working as a hub but fully supports outreach and activities for the wider area.

We can enhance our district's sporting excellence for youth, senior and national players.

So why a sports village? It delivers critical mass and an iconic destination.

It benefits the local community, local sports clubs and leagues; including disadvantaged and challenged groups. Costs are shared and reduced. A self-sustaining heritage is delivered for Wycombe.

Let's do it!

Jeff Brydon
Wycombe Sports Village
Group, Stanley Road, High
Wycombe