



UPDATE ON FARNHAM PARK PLAYING FIELDS AND SOUTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GOLF COURSE

In August this year, Buckinghamshire Council and Wycombe Wanderers announced a new partnership to secure the long-term future of the Farnham Park Playing Fields and South Buckinghamshire Golf Course as a flagship sporting hub for the community.

Since then, representatives of Wycombe Wanderers have spent time meeting with some of the sports organisations and clubs using the Playing Fields, as well as members and staff at the golf course.

Having been part of Buckinghamshire's sporting community since our founding in 1887, Wycombe Wanderers are aware how important this site is locally, and the conversations over the summer have emphasised this further. The Club and the Council remain absolutely committed to working with the existing tenants and users of the site.

The shared vision for the site is that it becomes a modern, multi-sports hub with inclusive facilities that will significantly increase opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds across the community to play sport and be active.

This is a multi-year project and it will take several months to develop a detailed masterplan for the site. There will be consultation with local people and users of the facilities, likely next year, and a planning application will need to be submitted and approved. Importantly, the site will remain open as usual throughout this process.

Once Wycombe Wanderers take on responsibility for the day-to-day management of the site, they will be exploring potential changes to the operations of the existing golf course, in response to declining usage and ongoing financial losses associated with the facility. Any changes at the golf course would take place next spring at the earliest, meaning this year's season tickets and golf club memberships, which run to the end of March 2026, are respected.

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Looking further ahead, subject to securing planning approvals, the fabric and layout of the course will be redesigned and modernised with either 9 or 12 holes to make it more flexible, accessible and appealing to a wider audience including young people, families and casual golfers. The proposals could possibly also include a golf academy and a driving range. The Council and the Club are committed to keeping members regularly updated and to creating a long-term and thriving future for golf here.

There is lots of work to do over the coming months, and as Wycombe Wanderers start to assemble a professional design team, they will also be looking at opportunities to invest and improve across the whole site in the short to medium term. This could include refurbishment of the golf course club house, and upgrades to the changing facilities on the Playing Fields in time for the 2026/27 season. This will be explored further over the coming months and will be subject to planning approvals.

The Wycombe Wanderers Foundation will play a key role across the site to deliver a comprehensive range of programmes geared towards supporting local people and communities, in areas such as education, employability, sports participation, social mobility, health and inclusion.

Both the Council and Wycombe Wanderers are dedicated to working openly and collaboratively with site users and the community and to safeguarding this site as a public asset, while unlocking new opportunities, participation in sport, and a long-term home for the football club in Buckinghamshire.

Following initial meetings with the site tenants and users, below are some early FAQs.

FAQS

How has this project come about?

The Council, in its role as corporate trustee for Farnham Park Sports Fields charitable trust, has been considering the future operating model for the Playing Fields and South Bucks Golf Course for some time. The cost of running and maintaining the facilities has increased and it is simply not financially sustainable or feasible for the Trust/Council to continue subsidising their operation. Significant investment is also needed to ensure this site remains an attractive place to play sport or connect with nature for generations to come.

The decision to pursue a long-term leasing arrangement was taken following a comprehensive review of different options, and at the beginning of this year the Council started inviting proposals from interested parties. A comprehensive evaluation process was run, with officers assessing each proposal in detail before a panel of interviews was conducted.

Wycombe Wanderers was selected as the preferred leaseholder and the Council announced the decision in August.

Was any consultation undertaken on the decision to pursue a long-term lease?

Yes, public notices advising of the intention to lease the site were published locally and online in November last year, in line with the legal requirements for charity lease disposals, ahead of marketing the lease. No public representations were received. The Charity Commission was also informed.

Local councillors, the site's existing tenants, and the golf clubs were also informed before the Council's Cabinet, acting in its capacity as corporate trustee, approved the decision to market the lease in 2024.

Wycombe Wanderers has committed to a thorough consultation with local people, site users and tenants.

Whilst the Club is still at a very early stage and will start drawing up detailed designs for the site next year, there will be plenty of opportunities for people to get involved and have their say. Once a planning application is submitted, there will then be a further opportunity for local people to feedback when the Council conducts its own statutory consultation on the plans.

Why were Wycombe chosen by the Council?

Wycombe Wanderers are a well-known and established member of the Buckinghamshire community already with a strong track record of grass roots and community outreach. The Club set out an exciting vision that will secure the long-term future of the Farnham Park Playing Fields and South Buckinghamshire Golf Course as a flagship sporting hub for the community.

A key focus of the Club's bid was on increasing access to sport and expanding the range of activities on offer for the whole community, making this a modern and inclusive sports hub. The Wycombe Wanderers Foundation will be involved in delivering a comprehensive range of programmes geared towards supporting local people and communities, in areas such as education, employability, sports participation, social mobility, health and inclusion.

The Club have extensive experience in facility management and a team in place already to manage the transition. They have also brought on experienced golfing consultants with approximately 40 years' experience in owning and operating golf clubs.

As well as a vision for sporting excellence, they also demonstrated a real understanding of this site, its ecology, wildlife and habitats and a commitment to preserving these.

Lastly, they provided a robust and attractive financial package which will provide significant investment into enhancing the facilities across the playing fields and the golf course, which neither the Council nor the Trust is in a position to provide, but which is needed to ensure the sites remain viable into the longer term.

Will public access be protected?

Yes. This will remain a publicly accessible place and a hub for sport and recreation aligned with the Eton Rural District Council Act, which requires the site to be used for sport, physical training, and recreational purposes.

The shared vision for the site is that it becomes a modern, multi-sports hub with inclusive facilities that will significantly increase opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds across the community to play sport and be active.

The Playing Fields will remain open and continue to operate as usual, and the Club's proposals (subject to consultation and planning consent) would see significant investment with new and enhanced facilities in the future.

Golfing use will also be preserved, with the Club exploring options for a 9 or 12 hole layout to increase usage and make it more flexible and accessible for the wider community.

A part of the northern section of the existing golf course would become the Club's Training facility, and this would be the only part of the site fenced to protect the privacy and security of the players and Academy training there.

Ultimately, local people will continue to be able to visit this site, play sport, golf, walk their dogs or connect with nature.

Will there continue to be a golf course here?

Yes, the site will continue to operate as a golf course with the fabric and layout of the course transformed into a year-round 9 or 12 hole course (subject to planning consent), making it more flexible and accessible for the wider community, including young people, families and casual golfers. The Clubhouse would also be upgraded and refurbished.

Who will manage the golf course?

Wycombe Wanderers will have a lease of the entire site and have brought on a professional consultant team to manage the golf course. This is led by Phil Stevens, an ex-professional golfer with approximately 40 years' experience in owning and operating golf clubs and facilities. His experience includes Seaford Golf Club, Hamptworth Golf Club, Cowdray Golf and Polo, Leatherhead Golf Club, Manchester and Northwick Park Golf Centre, Lingfield Marriot, Chiddingfold Golf.

What will happen to the existing staff?

The staff will have the opportunity to transfer to employment with Wycombe Wanderers under TUPE arrangements and there will be a TUPE consultation process in due course.

Will local trees and wildlife be protected?

Yes. The Club's ambition is to improve biodiversity and ecology across the site. We already have a strong track record to build on – our BeOne Sustainability Strategy is delivering local conservation efforts around our Adams Park stadium.

The Club has already undertaken a high-level review of all the trees and vegetation around the site, and is committed to retaining and protecting the Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites.

Will there be an opportunity for site users, golf members, and the wider public to share their views on the proposals?

Yes. Wycombe Wanderers is committed to engaging directly with existing site users about the proposals. Alongside this, a wider programme of community consultation will be carried out to ensure that all local residents, stakeholders and interested groups have the opportunity to view the proposals, ask questions and share feedback. These conversations will help shape the plans before a planning application is submitted.