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By Nathaniel Lawson, Local Democracy
reporter and Louise Parry

Villagers bewildered at Wanderers' golf course plan



IMAGE SOURCE, WYCOMBE WANDERERS

Image caption,

Wycombe Wanderers train at Marlow Road, next to their Adams Park stadium, but would relocate training to a site near Slough

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A village community group is "bewildered" at plans for a League One football club to build a new training facility on a golf course.

Wycombe Wanderers recently agreed a long-term lease of South Buckinghamshire Golf Course and Farnham Park Playing Fields from Buckinghamshire Council.

The club intends to reduce the 18-hole golf course to nine or 12 holes and build a training base on the northern section.

The wider vision for the site was to create a "modern, multi-sport hub with inclusive facilities", but the Stoke Poges Task Force believed the proposal would make the site less attractive.



IMAGE SOURCE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

Image caption,

The golf clubhouse could also be refurbished and a golf academy was being considered. The group also warned that Farnham Park was designated as high-quality green belt land and owned by a charity to preserve it for public use - making private academies or commercial development potentially unlawful.

The move would enable Wycombe Wanderers to create a training space for its academy players alongside the senior squad. Currently their training sites are 40 minutes apart.

In newly released plans, the club said reducing the size of the golf course would make the site more flexible and appeal to a wider audience "including young people, families and casual golfers".

It is employing a team led by an ex-professional golfer "with approximately 40 years' experience in owning and operating golf clubs and facilities".

A golf academy and driving range were also being considered, as well as upgrading existing training facilities on the Farnham Park playing fields.

All proposals remained subject to further consultation and planning permission.

'Precedent' threat to green belt

The football club said the project would take place over several years, with consultation promised for local residents.

It stressed that the vision was to "significantly increase opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to be active".

Wycombe Wanderers said it was committed to working with existing users of the playing fields and golf course and it had already met with a number of local organisations this summer.

However, Stoke Poges Task Force said the announcement wrongly implied that meaningful talks with the community had taken place.

It argued that consent had not been established for the project's direction, according to the **Local Democracy Reporting Service**.

The task force questioned the benefits of a smaller nine or 12-hole course - and argued there was little evidence of demand for such a model.

A spokesperson said: "This is not just a Stoke Poges issue. Far from it.

"If development of this green belt land is allowed to proceed, it sets a precedent that threatens the protection of our green belt across Buckinghamshire and beyond."

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