

Bowlers 'disappointed' as planners reject project that would have paid for clubhouse revamp

Fears club will fold after homes blow

A BOWLING club which has been part of Dartmouth Park for 100 years faces an uncertain future after the Town Hall threw out plans to build new homes on its grounds.

by DAN CARRIER

Mansfield Bowling Club, in Croftdown Road, had asked for permission to build eight homes on an outdoor

bowling green and a pair of tennis courts. Without the cash raised by the project the club says it faces closure.

Its directors told councillors they planned to

use the money from the homes development to improve their clubhouse's disabled access, open a public gym and make urgent repairs.

But on Thursday, council officers ran through a list of reasons why the project should be rejected. Objections were raised by members of Mansfield Neighbours Committee pressure group

Planning officers told the committee they were "sympathetic" to the club's cash problems but "any proposal should not be to the detriment of open space". They added that new homes would have a negative impact on a conservation area and that there were more than 11 other reasons to turn the plans down.

Mansfield Neighbours Committee chairman Paul Barker said: "The officers' report does not leave a single leg for the application proposals to stand on."

He said the club had acted "strangely", adding: "There has been no transparency from the club and they are always making threats of dereliction, eviction and going into administration. This is simply speculative, luxury housing."

Chairman of the Dartmouth Park conservation area advisory committee Patrick Lefevre wanted the land to be used for public recreation. He said: "This is a protected open space which has been in active use since Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts made this part of her Holly Lodge estate available to the community for outdoor

sport and recreation roughly 140 years ago.

"You don't need eight large, four-storey houses, with associated private gardens, private roads and private parking, with a resale value in excess of £16million, to refurbish a clubhouse built as recently as 40 years ago, however poorly managed and maintained and with or

without a small charging gym."

He added: "Only a fraction of the profit from this project would be spent on the refurbishment. None of it will go to ensuring the refurbished clubhouse stays in operation in the medium to long term."

A spokesman for the bowling club said it had "a

significant number of supporters and the majority of local people realised the benefits of this [plan]. We are disappointed with the council officers' decision."

Neighbour Mandy Rose warned that without the investment, the club would fold. She added: "I fear it could fall into disrepair and attract anti-social behaviour."