

Client: Oak Holdings plc
Source: Rotherham Star
Date: 11 May 2006
Page: 2
Circulation: 70127
Size: 219cm2
AVE: 1226.4

Leisure complex set for approval

Council planners back huge green belt development

A HUGE leisure, sport and entertainment complex between Rotherham and Sheffield is expected to be approved today.

Developer Oak Holdings wants to build the 'world class' complex on a 320-acre, part green belt site next to Rother Valley country park, creating up to 2,000 jobs.

Although they admit the development is 'inappropriate' in the green belt, Rotherham Council planners are recommending it be approved in view of the huge number of jobs it will create.

The complex will include two hotels, spa and health facilities, indoor and extreme sports centre, conference and exhibition centre, and high-

tech outdoor golf driving range.

But plans for a West End style theatre, cinema and bowling alley have been dropped following objections from Sheffield Council, which feared it could affect business in the city centre.

Planners are likely to impose strict conditions which will restrict what can be sold at the complex in a bid to protect local businesses.

Before the scheme can finally go ahead it will have to be approved by the Government because of the implications for the green belt.

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

has opposed the scheme, saying it should be built on a brownfield site and not in green space.

Today it was revealed the developer has agreed to pay for improvements to Junction 31 of the M1 to cope with the extra traffic generated by the complex.

Planners are working on a business case to convince transport bosses to open a rail station near the complex but if that fails, a bus service to the site would be laid on for visitors and staff.

Steve Lewis, chief executive of Oak Holdings, said: "The sporting and daytime leisure aspects of the YES!

Project complements the urban renaissance pro-

gramme throughout South Yorkshire and means the project is destined to become a comprehensive world-class destination."

A Rotherham Council spokesman said: "This proposal represents inappropriate development in the green belt and there will be some harm to it. But this has to be weighed against very special circumstances.

"Chiefly this is the economic case and the positive impact the Yes! Project will have on what is already a significant and leisure destination. It would not have the same impact in some other location."