

The Forester



Incorporating Dean Forest Mercury, Dean Forest Guardian and Lydney Observer

January 27, 2021

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Closed former school to go under the hammer

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Giant food hub scheme wins go ahead to revitalise docks

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Hartpury student Lily fulfils England netball ambition

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'Bitter disappointment' as consultation hopes dashed

CAMPAIGNERS have been left 'bitterly disappointed' after hopes to extend the consultation period over a 5,000-home 'new town' in the Forest were dashed.

The Joint Parish Communications Group, representing six parish councils in the area, had hoped to extend the public consultation concerning the Coleford-sized development.

Since the Council's Preferred Option was presented and accepted for consultation by the full council in October, residents in the six parishes have distributed 7,000 leaflets urging residents to take part in the consultation process. They have raised a petition, placed banners at strategic road junctions in the area and set up a website and Facebook page to get their message across.

With the third national lockdown bringing leaflet distribution to a halt, there were hopes the public consultation period

by Forester reporter

news@theforester.co.uk

could be extended.

But these hopes were dashed this week when it was confirmed the consultation would close as planned on January 29.

Speaking for the Group, Churcham Parish Council chairman Councillor John Francis said he was bitterly disappointed at the refusal for an extension to the consultation period.

"The latest National Lockdown has meant that no public meetings can be staged, no face-to-face consultations can be held with council officers and communication is hampered by notoriously poor broadband in the Forest area.

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A banner opposing the scheme has recently been vandalised

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Weather Watch

By Jonathan Powell

Everydayweather.co.uk

Forecast: Changeable with plenty of showers, some wintry. Breezy.

Thursday Showers, sunny spells. Day 11C/52F Night 7C/45F in Lea. Mod south-westerly.

Friday Scattered showers. Day 9C/48F Night 6C/43F in Bridstow. Light/Mod westerly.

Saturday Showers, sunny spells. Day 8C/46F Night 6C/43F in Bridstow. Moderate north-westerly.

Sunday Scattered showers. Day 5C/41F Night 4C/39F in Staunton. Light/Mod south-easterly.

Monday Showers, sunny spells. Day 6C/43F Night 1C/34F in Foy. Light/Mod south-westerly.

Tuesday Showers, sunny spells. Day 7C/45F Night 2C/36F in Hardwicke. Moderate south-westerly.

Wednesday Showers. Day 9C/48F Night 5C/41F in Newnham. Moderate south-westerly.

Outlook: Unsettled. Chilly.

Sunrise: 7.58 a.m. Sunset: 4.53 p.m.

Moonrise: 4.20 p.m. Moonset: 8.48 a.m.

Chemists' Rota

A pharmacy is open between 10am and 2pm on Sunday, January 31 at: The Co-operative Pharmacy, 33 Newerne Street, Lydney (01594 843443)

If it is necessary that you have an URGENT (as written by your doctor) prescription dispensed when no pharmacies are open, you should contact your GP or the police who will be able to help you.

News

Business grants open for January lockdown

THE application process for all business grants has now reopened with individuals encouraged to check their eligibility and apply through the Forest of Dean council website.

A series of different business grants have been made available by the Government with local businesses applying to their local council to access the funding where they are eligible.

Since the pandemic start-

ed Forest of Dean District Council has distributed 2,154 grants totalling more than £22m in vital funding to local businesses.

Following the series of changes to tiers before Christmas, many businesses were left confused on what they were entitled to.

The Council has simplified the highly complicated grant applications into two simple forms with staff ensuring that once a business applies it is allocated all the

grants it is eligible for without business owners having to apply multiple times. Businesses will only need to apply once depending on whether they were closed by national restrictions or severely impacted but allowed to remain open.

Cllr Bernie O'Neill, Cabinet Member for the Economy at Forest of Dean District Council, said: "We know how worried businesses have been about these grants as they face

having little or no income.

"We have made the applications process as simple and as easy as possible for businesses so these applications are not another worry in a challenging time. We will do our very best to process these grants as quickly as possible and get this financial lifeline out to our communities.

"I would urge business owners to respond to their emails swiftly to help us speed up the payment

process or act quickly to fill in an application form if they haven't previously done so."

Any business waiting for payment, unsure of the status of their application or wondering whether they should apply for a grant, should see the council's dedicated web page: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/coronavirus-business-and-licensing/coronavirus-business-grants/>



Former St Anthony's Headteacher Lorna Middleton and pupils marched to Cinderford town centre to post letters to Lord Agnew in 2018

Former Cinderford school to go under the hammer

A FORMER school which closed in 2018 amid controversy is to go under the hammer next month.

The former St Anthony's School in Cinderford had a closure notice in February 2018, just days after the school completed a £750,000 extension to bring it up to modern day safety standards.

Now the Belle Vue Road school is among lots at an online auction to be held on February 2-3 by Paul Fosh Auctions.

The school, which had nearly 100 primary and nursery pupils,

had been hit by a series of critical Ofsted reports and was in special measures.

But under a new headteacher and board of trustees, the school said it was turning things round and needed time.

Pupils, staff and supporters launched a campaign to keep the former Catholic school open, and marched to Cinderford town centre to post letters to the Department for Education urging the minister to keep it open.

But despite head teacher Lorna

Middleton saying they had "begun a journey of rapid improvement" under a new partnership agreement with Dene Magna School, the minister issued a termination warning notice last week, saying he does not believe it can improve quickly enough.

Announcing the closure to the governors, Schools Commissioner Lisa Mannal said the school was placed in special measures for the second time last year following an Ofsted inspection, which judged it inadequate.

She claimed that plans to improve the school did not adequately show how it could be achieved.

The three linked buildings in Belle Vue Road stand in a half-acre site and the guide price for the property is £165,000.

"There is huge potential to convert the site to a high-density residential scheme (subject to necessary permissions)," reads the auctioneers' report. "A pre-application has been submitted with a positive response from the Local Authority."

Concerns as consultation not extended

Continues from Front Page

"The distribution of campaign leaflets and banners has also had to stop on what is the biggest development the Forest has ever considered," said Mr Francis.

The group say a same-day email response to their request came from Green Party member and Joint Deputy Leader Councillor

Chris McFarling, who, they said, told the group that their online communication facilities seemed to be functioning, and that they could spread the word by phone if broadband was an issue.

This latest setback to the campaign to stop the new settlement on prime farmland at the pinch-point between the A40 and A48 has been compounded by

a Facebook block on their Forest of Dean Housing 'Have-Your-Say' site due to a complaint on 'social/political' grounds. And one of the banners put up by a concerned resident opposing the scheme has recently been vandalised.

But despite these obstacles, the Stop the Greenbelt Grab campaign has spread Forest-wide, attracting more than 6,000

signatures to its petition with messages of protest and generating hundreds of emails to the council opposing the plans.

Leading businessmen, including John Thurston, chairman of the Watts Group, Gary Jones, MD of Glevum Windows and Neill Ricketts, new chair of the Forest Enterprise Partnership, question the plan's viability on traffic/transport

grounds and its benefit to the district as a whole.

To learn more about the campaign and sign the petition to challenge the Local Plan visit: www.your-say.uk

To express your views to District Councillors about the overall housing and infrastructure Local Plan, visit www.fdean-consult.objective.co.uk and click on Local Plan Preferred Option.