

# Residents oppose plans to break land covenant

THE Anstey Road Residents Group (ARG) have stepped up their campaign against the building of a supermarket store on the Coors Sports Ground by bowling what they believe to be a powerful showstopper.

They are challenging the right of Coors and East Hampshire District Council to break a 75-year old protective covenant which seeks to protect the bulk of the site, in perpetuity, for sport and leisure use by the people of Alton.

Drawn up in 1934 between Courages Brewery (as the owner) and Alton Urban District Council, the covenant is now the responsibility of Coors and EHDC.

The only development it allows would be the construction of 10 houses on the strip of land fronting Anstey Lane.

This latest act of defiance by ARG follows the staging last week by the Molson Coors/Vale Retail partner-

ship of a public consultation exercise outlining proposals for a new supermarket on the Coors Sports Ground site in Anstey Road.

The residents were unimpressed by the exhibition, and in particular some of the arguments used by Coors/Vale as a selling point.

They disagree vehemently with a bid to market the sports ground as a 'town centre' site.

ARG chairman Graham Hill is adamant: "It is distinctly 'out-of-centre' and would not deliver in terms of town centre sustainability."

They do not believe claims by Vale that it is unlikely to be a 24-hour store nor that they have dropped the idea of including a petrol station on the site.

What they fear is a 21st century supermarket with blazing neon lights, non-stop trading and constant and increased traffic movement.

If the planners renege on their moral obligation and make an agreement with the

landowner to trash the covenant, what ARG would prefer to see would be housing of an appropriate density and style - "a Shipley Close mark II".

Allocated for housing in the strategic Local Plan, residents say this use to be more appropriate than a supermarket in a residential conservation area.

They would argue too against the claim by Coors/Vale that acceptance of a supermarket on the site should be seen by Altonians as a "last-ditch attempt" to provide the town with sporting gain.

ARG views the proposed relocation of Alton Town Football Club from the Coors ground to Anstey Park as a catalyst for "net loss" in terms of green space.

If ATFC takes over the Anstey Park football enclosure it would leave Alton United Youth Football Club needing a new home.

The current proposal would, as a result, see the building of a new youth foot-

ball hub for Alton United in Anstey Park. According to ARG this would result in a net loss to the town of nearly five acres of green space on the Coors sports ground site, together with a large part of currently open space at Anstey Park, which would be given over to football.

ARG campaigner Tony Grange-Bennett told the *Herald*: "This supermarket is being sold to us as something of genuine value for the community (in terms of sports regeneration through retail gain) when it is more like a valuable windfall for Coors/Vale."

Having carried out an informal 'exit poll' in the pouring rain outside the Coors/Vale exhibition at the Assembly Rooms, ARG campaigners believe that the majority were "wholeheartedly opposed" to the proposed scheme. They are now challenging Coors/Vale to publish the unadulterated results, "free of glitz and spin" so that it is clear where the public support lies.