

Tennis courts will be out of action for up to 18 months

Sports facility will be closed until work on flood alleviation scheme is completed

By RICHARD MAYNARD
newsdesk@newburynews.co.uk
@newburytoday

WORK to build Thatcham's flood alleviation scheme will mean the closure of the tennis courts at Thatcham Memorial Playing Fields for up to 18 months.

Plans to build the scheme were approved by West Berkshire Council in April, including changes to access to the site.

Because of the works, the tennis courts have been closed and will not be available until it is completed.

Thatcham Tennis Club said that it anticipated the work could take between six and 18 months, and the club would ensure the courts were reinstated and reopened as soon as work has been completed.

Users and members can book courts at Newbury Tennis Club and Victoria Park during this time.

In July, the council said it was fully committed to all facilities reopening once the work had been completed.

In a statement on its website, the council added: "A new location on the playing fields has been found



The closed tennis courts at Thatcham Memorial Playing Fields

Ref: 37-1625A

for the dog exercise area, but the weather is delaying the preparation of the area as that too needs seeding and time to grow so this is likely to be open in the spring 2026.

"The work to restore the playing fields follows the creation of a flood alleviation scheme on the site.

"Part of a broader scheme to pro-

tect Thatcham from flooding, the scheme will protect more than 70 houses from flooding by helping to manage surface water – with a water detention basin and swale storing water during extreme storms and releasing it slowly back into the Thames Water surface water sewer.

"Since the significant flooding in 2007 when more than 1,200 homes were flooded a comprehensive programme of flood alleviation schemes built in Cold Ash Hill, Tull Way, Floral Way and South East Thatcham are protecting 913 properties from the impact of surface water flooding."

THATCHAM

Keeping in touch

Have you got a story?
Contact our Thatcham reporter
on (01635) 886637
or email: newsdesk@newburynews.co.uk
Twitter @newburytoday

News updates from Thatcham are now available online throughout the week. Go to newburytoday.co.uk and select the district pages

newburytoday.co.uk

Obscene message charge is dropped

PROSECUTORS have dropped a charge against a man accused of sending a menacing or obscene message.

Daniel Read had pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Specifically, the 30-year-old, of Fyfield Road, Thatcham, denied sending an electronic message that was grossly offensive, indecent, menacing or obscene in Thatcham on September 1, 2023.

At a court hearing earlier this year Mr Read spoke only to confirm his details and to plead not guilty to the single charge.

Reading magistrates told him on that occasion that the case could proceed no further that day and that it would be adjourned for a trial to be arranged.

However, at the same court on Tuesday, August 19, it was announced that the proceedings against Mr Read would be discontinued and he was formally acquitted.

Treasures restored to former glory

A 131-year old sewing machine and a miniature antique kettle are among the treasures to have been restored to their former glory by talented repairers in Thatcham.

In a scene reminiscent of the BBC show *The Repair Shop*, volunteers at Newbury and Thatcham Repair Café have been hard at work fixing visitors' precious belongings.

Thatcham mayor Petra Pemberton was among those to take an item in need of attention to the group's latest meeting – seeking help with the restoration of the storage box used to store her civic chains.

In poor condition and with broken clasps and hinges, the box was proving difficult to open without causing further damage and so the job fell to repairer David Southgate, who accepted the challenge of repairing it in his spare time.

He has completed the repair and now returned the box to



David Southgate looks to repair Thatcham mayor Petra Pemberton's storage box

the town council, which has posted a huge thanks to Mr Southgate and the repair café

on Facebook.

The mayor, alongside deputy mayor Mark Lillycrop, visited the café to talk to visitors and volunteer repairers and see some of the work in action.

Among the items repaired were four sewing machines – varying from an 1893 hand machine to more modern models with electrical faults, timing issues and bobbin thread jams – all of which were fixed.

One of the smallest items demanding attention was an antique miniature kettle with its original spout detached and lid knob missing.

The owner thinks the kettle was brought into the UK from Germany by her grandparents.

Whether the item is modern



The repaired storage box



or antique, repair café volunteers say they enjoy solving the puzzles of whatever comes their way, listening to the stories behind the belongings and giving visitors hints and tips for keeping their items working long into the future.

The next Newbury and Thatcham Repair Café event will be at Newbury Methodist Church Hall on Sunday, September 28, from 2pm to 4.30pm – with the last check in at 4pm.



The Plough Inn, which has been closed since 2017

Housing plan for old pub

PLANNERS are considering an application to build semi-detached homes at the site of a disused pub.

The application is in respect of The Plough Inn in Chapel Street, Thatcham.

Last December planners approved a bid by Sandstone Estates Ltd to transform the site into five residential flats, subject to conditions.

Under the existing planning permission the pub will be converted into three flats with a shared communal garden, while the rear plot will be occupied by two purpose-built flats, with private gardens.

Ten parking spaces, 14 bicycle parking spaces, waste storage and other ancillary works are also included in the proposal.

Listed building consent has been granted, since it is Grade II listed.

Now, a fresh application has been lodged with planners, "to allow for a pair of semi detached houses" in place of

the two flats.

The district council's highways department has commented: "It is proposed the previously approved [two, two-bedroom] flats ... are now proposed to be two [three-bedroom] houses.

"For this development at least 12 car parking spaces must be provided.

"As this is not proposed, neither is it achievable ... the highway [department] recommendation is for refusal on the grounds of insufficient parking."

Thatcham Town Council has yet to comment on the proposed change, in its advisory capacity to West Berkshire Council planners.

Meanwhile the application can be viewed in full, and commented on, by visiting the planning section of West Berkshire Council's website and using the reference 25/01892/FUL.



A repair volunteer fixes a faulty sewing machine