

Dons reject Luton merger

Wimbledon's administrators have ruled out the possibility of a merger with Luton Town.

Luton's designate chief executive John Gurney had suggested the Second Division club might try to buy or merge with the financially-troubled Dons.



Milton Keynes looks to be the only option for the Dons

But administrators Grant Thornton told the BBC Sport website that they were concentrating on negotiating a takeover of Wimbledon with a consortium of businessmen in Milton Keynes.

"It doesn't look attractive to me at all," Grant Thornton partner Nick Wood said of the Luton proposal.

Wimbledon, who were placed in administration last week, are due to move to Milton Keynes for the start of next season with games being played initially at the National Hockey Stadium.

The Milton Keynes consortium would need to come up with about £5m to take over control of the club from its Norwegian owner Bjorn Gjelsten.

The administrators will have a meeting with the Football League on Thursday, at which they are expected to be asked for guarantees that Wimbledon will be able to compete next season.

"The ideal situation is that the Milton Keynes local investors come up with some money," said Wood.

"We have been having meetings constantly for the past four or five days. It is going forward and they are still very enthusiastic.

The club should attract crowds in Milton Keynes of at least 6,000 - which would make it much more viable

Administrator Nick Wood

"The club can't survive on the crowds it was getting at Crystal Palace.

"It should attract crowds in Milton Keynes of at least 6,000, which would make it much more viable."

Gurney had raised the possibility of Luton merging with Wimbledon in order to buy a "back-door promotion to Division One".

But he must now turn his attention to appointing a new manager following the sacking of Joe Kinnear and Mick Harford last month.

Chaos

Gurney has since described their dismissals as a mistake, and set up a nomination process to give supporters the chance - via three stages of voting - to select the next manager.

"The nomination process has now finished - and few would be surprised that Joe and Mick are slightly ahead of all the other candidates," said Gurney.

"Other nominations include Mike Newell, Terry Fenwick, Iain Dowie, Bruce Rioch, Nigel Clough, Jan Molby, Brian Stein, Paul Parker and John Hollins."

Meanwhile, the Football League have dismissed suggestions Wimbledon could play all their home games away during the 2003-04 campaign.

There is still work to be done to ensure the National Hockey Stadium is up to the required standards, and beginning the 2003-04 season at an alternative venue has not been ruled out.

Playing all their home games away has also been mooted if the move to Milton Keynes falls through, but such an outcome seems unlikely given the views of the Football League.

Spokesman John Nagle said: "Playing all their games away is just not practical and it would cause more problems than it would solve.

"A lot of thought goes into the fixture list, teams play away on a certain week because there might be a team down the road that is playing at home."