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It's time to come clean

WITH Wycombe Wanderers storming ahead in the Vauxhall-Opel League — 17 points in front and the league championship virtually assured — management and fans are once again discussing the club's future.

What of that future? The boardroom and the terraces don't know.

What happened to the grand plan to move out from Loakes Park and prepare for Football League status elsewhere? Club chairman Brian Lee and his fellow directors don't know.

What happened to Wycombe Health Authority's £3 million scheme to extend hospital facilities on the ground once the Wanderers had left. Chairman Peter Land and Authority members don't know.

Who does know? Wycombe Council could provide some answers but it is not saying. Or, perhaps, it doesn't know.

Wycombe Wanderers could be facing promotion to the Football League this time next year and it has no idea where it will be playing.

The club's future no longer rests in the hands of its management, but more in decisions still to be taken by Wycombe Council.

Sands was the club's choice for a new home worthy of Football League membership, but it wasn't Wycombe Council's. The planners blew the whistle on it several months ago on Green Belt grounds and in the face of considerable pressure from local residents, who, understandably, did not relish a football league club on their doorstep.

The council was confident at that time that an alternative ground could be found. That confidence, it seems, was misplaced. A number of alternatives have been considered, as they had been several years previously, and none has proved any more acceptable second time around.

The council entertained the possibility of developing surplus school playing fields, but, apparently, the county landlord has more profitable ideas of disposing of those.

All this leaves Wycombe Wanderers at Loakes Park, a ground unlikely to fulfill the stringent requirements of the Football League.

It leaves Peter Land and his Wycombe Health Authority team champing at the bit of £3 million, approved by Government for Wycombe Hospital extensions, including a much needed geriatric unit.

The money is burning a hole in his pocket and Land has a burning fear in his heart that unless allocated soon the money will be reclaimed and put to some other and just as urgent hospital use.

It leaves developers West Bruton, who had been prepared to assist the Wanderers move out in return for retail warehousing permission on part of the vacated soccer ground, contemplating moving on to invest in better and less troublesome projects elsewhere.

It is an unsatisfactory situation which, on the face of it, Wycombe Council is showing little inclination to resolve. The principals in the scenario are looking for direction and not getting it.

The council has made no public statement since its planning committee turned down the Sands proposal. It is time it did so.