

Pitch plan turned down

WYCOMBE Wanderers have been left with nowhere to train when they quit Loakes Park, after planners refused to allow a plastic practice pitch at their new home.

The club could be left to beg a pitch from the council's Handy Cross sports centre because turf at Adams Park, their new ground, won't be strong enough to stand up to training.

"It makes you wonder whether this council wants a football club in the town at all. We had to go to appeal to find a new ground and now we have been stopped here," said Wanderers' chairman Ivor Beeks.

Report by Emma Wilkinson

"I don't know where we'll do our pre-season training. We could end up at Handy Cross."

On Thursday, Wycombe District Council's Development Control Committee refused the application because it felt the pitch and its four floodlight columns would intrude on the area of open countryside around the new Adams Park ground in Hillbottom Road, Sands.

The application followed a previous refusal for a similar

plan last November. A meeting of the committee ordered a site visit by members last month after residents and conservationists' protests.

The club planned to use the pitch not for training and its community sport programme to encourage more youngsters to be involved with the Wanderers.

At the meeting, Cllr David Shakespeare said the pitch and its lights would be an intrusion on the surrounding area. "The scheme is much larger than the committee first thought. You will be able to see the lights above the roofs," he said.

But Cllr Jenny McGhee said: "We should be supporting the club, not kicking it in the teeth."

Councillors voted unanimously to refuse the plan.

After the meeting, Mr Beeks spoke of his sadness at the decision. "I am very disappointed and I know our new manager Martin O'Neill is too."

"This pitch wasn't just for the club it is for the community as well. We have tried to do something for the town. Now we shall have to try and continue the community scheme without the council's help."

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