

Clubs' stadia come under microscope

WITH optimistic promotion noises to be heard in the corridors of The Meadow and Adams Park, both Chesham United and Wycombe Wanderers have received support from ground grading officials.

And although at Marlow promotion to the Conference is a long-term aim, the club need to improve their Oak Tree Road ground or face the ultimate punishment — relegation.

Michael Eagleton, Marlow Chairman, admitted this week that unless the club acquired a Premier Division grading by next January, Marlow would be relegated.

The issue of ground grading comes to a head at this stage of each season. The grounds of the clubs placed in the top four in the Pyramid leagues are inspected to gauge whether facilities are adequate for the next level of football.

In their recent visit, Vauxhall League officials bestowed an 'A' grading on Chesham's ground, thus con-

NICK GOODMAN and PETE LANSLEY report

firming The Meadow as suitable for Premier Division football.

And while Football League officials were busy inspecting Rockingham Road, Underhill, Layer Road and Moss Lane, GM Vauxhall Conference secretary Peter Hunter assured the Bucks Free Press that Adams Park was not forgotten.

"They will go to Wycombe if necessary, but some of the Football League people have already visited there unofficially. The point is, being a new ground, Wycombe's is 99 per cent League guaranteed."

Blues' secretary John Goldsworthy accepted this: "You've got to draw the line somewhere — and it costs about £1,000 to have a ground inspected anyway. But if results start changing, they'll be down here like a dose of salts."

Meanwhile, Eagleton said: "We

have got to do work at the end of this season to retain the grading in the Premier Division."

Although Marlow have installed seats from Wembley in their stand, Eagleton is conscious considerable work still needs to be done. Looking ahead to next season he said: "Even if we finish top of the league there is no way we would go up." The club wouldn't be able to foot the bill for the necessary ground improvements to enter the Conference.

"It is very frightening. We have no money quite frankly," he said.

To help meet the Vauxhall Premier League ground requirements Marlow aim to increase their covered standing room to 600, which would satisfy the Conference requirements.

The club currently has between 350-400 standing under cover but aim to cover one goal end, which would afford room for 200.

Marlow hope sponsorship will help pay for the improvements, while supporters will be called upon to carry out the work.