

Council is working to help the soccer club

YOUR correspondent Derek Easden (Bucks Free Press, February 8) criticises the council for failing to come to the aid of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club and being generally apathetic about the parking and access problems which have arisen since the move to Adams Park.

While now is the time to look to the future rather than the past, it should be recalled that the council raised planning objections to the Hillbottom Road site not only because of its location in the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but also on the grounds that the parking provision (320 spaces) would be wholly inadequate to meet demand and the single, cul-de-sac point of vehicular access was unsuitable to serve a facility of this sort.

Notwithstanding these reservations the Inspector, appointed to determine the appeal, considered the access and parking provision to be acceptable and planning permission was granted.

Since plans were originally lodged with the council, average home gates have risen from 1,100 to nearly 3,000, worsening the difficulties the council had foreseen.

In an effort to identify problems and discuss possible solutions associated with the relocation, the council was instrumental in setting up a consultative forum of interested parties (the club, members and officers of the council, police, bus companies and the county council, as highway authority) to review the situation on a regular basis.

There are no easy remedies to the difficulties that have arisen but progress has been made by the making of traffic orders prohibiting parking in certain stretches of highway close to the ground, thus easing the flow of traffic; by encouraging the club to reach agreement with adjoining industrialists and schools in the Sands area to provide off-street parking on match days and by urging the bus companies to provide a service to and from games.

These meetings continue and there is no question that the council will turn its back on the problems. We wish to work with the club, recognising its ambition and the support it has in the district but must also have regard to those who object.

So far as the training pitch is concerned, the council will shortly consider a further proposal to provide such a facility and, potentially, an extra 200 parking spaces.

The site for these additional facilities is of course within the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where such development would not normally be permitted as a matter of policy. Members must weigh in the balance the benefits of such development and the future success of the club against the apparent policy objections and, at this stage, I am clearly unable to pre-judge what that decision will be. I hope however that a solution can be found to resolve the current problems.

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