

CHURCH

By
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VIEW



Council's computer must run on steam

MY dictionary definition of the word 'lampoon' is 'virulent or scandalous piece of satire'. It is just as well that I looked it up, for I did not think it was quite that harsh.

The point arises from a simple question I asked of the planning department of Wycombe District Council and to which I expected to receive a simple answer in reasonably short order.

But, in the amazed catchphrase of the now long-gone comedian Sid Field - 'What a performance!'

The people to whom I spoke were extremely polite, all trying, in their several ways, to be helpful. But, even so...

The council's planning committee, as we all now know, has to consider a renewed, revised application for further development at Adams Park, home of Wycombe Wanderers FC. All I wished to know was when the committee would be considering the plan.

Waiting patiently for my initial phone call to be answered, understanding that the switchboard must be sorely taxed, I asked for the planning department, and amplified my query to a pleasant voice in the general office in a protracted question and answer session.

"I'll put it in the computer," she said. Silence for a while. Then, "I haven't forgotten you; the computer has gone on a go-slow." Steam-driven no doubt.

Eventually I gleaned the information that it was to have been discussed - perhaps even decided - February. But it wasn't. Well, that I already knew.

So, when would it be heard? I offered the info that I believed it was to be in March. No joy - "We are not allowed to give details until three days before the committee meeting!"

I came out of anonymity and tried the Press key, sensing then a slight hesitation in the guarding of such a state secret.

Perhaps, the lass mused, I might speak to Mr X. Good idea; let's try that. Moments of silence.

Then, to the accompaniment of sweet music, a new voice came on the line. "Are you Mr X?" I queried. "No, this is Mr XX."

Once more I went into my spiel and was told that this gentleman, affability personified, knew of no such embargo.

One of the pleasures of his life, I felt, was to be helpful with information. Action stations - he would ring me back.

In about two minutes flat he was with me again. The application would not be heard in March, but in April. Next time, if there is a next time, I'm going straight for Mr XX, sans music.

And, you know, the only reason I sought the information about the date was to ensure that this column, destined for March 8 publication, would not have been already out-dated because the committee had made its decision a couple of days earlier. If, by some mischance of rescheduling it has, it clearly is not my fault.

The new application for Adams Park seeks to obtain consent for a training pitch and another 200 parking spaces.

Councillor Len Hampton, planning and development committee chairman, for whom I for one have great respect, sought to assure us in a letter to the BFP that the council is working to help the soccer club, adding that his authority must also have regard to those who object.

He says that the site for these additional facilities is, of course, within the Green Belt and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. But, Len, without any help from the council, Adams Park is there. The football stadium, with its various other facilities, is there.

As I understand it, the club is not seeking to extend its area but to maximise its use for the benefit of 'The Blues', its increasing number of supporters, other sporting organisations, particularly on the youth side, and for the public at large. In short, sensibly to realise its full potential.

When one approaches it, through its trading estate 'area of outstanding beauty' one sees an imposing stadium on the left while on the right is a young mountain of earth and chalk, the detritus from the previous levelling.

As it stands, it is unsightly, environmentally unlovely and quite useless.

Given the chance, the club administrators could immensely improve it. Some part of the parking problem could be eased.

Could be, too, that in a community spirit the industrialists might helpfully - perhaps even profitably - allow supporters' cars the use of the concrete hard standings at their premises, at least for the week-end games. Buses have operated - but ought, perhaps, to be augmented.

Give it a go, Len - and set that to serene music along with the council switchboard.

●Late footnote: I understand that the application has been called in by the minister for his reconsideration.