

New soccer plan does not solve parking crisis

THERE has been comment in the local press by non-residents about the difficulty of vehicle access to the football stadium, but especially from the ground after matches. This seems a small price for visitors to pay as compared with the inconvenience suffered by local residents from inconsiderate car parking.

The recent planning application for an additional 202 parking spaces at the stadium would only make congestion worse and incur further delay when driving away from football matches. Neither would it noticeably improve matters for local residents.

An additional 202 parking spaces would still only provide a total of 522 spaces for the stadium of 6,000 capacity. Even if the stadium runs at only half capacity there would still be a shortfall of several hundred parking spaces at the stadium, and local residents continue to be severely inconvenienced.

In permitting the stadium to be sited at Sands, the Department of the Environment Inspector, in his report, allowed for the use of courtesy coaches and public transport when considering and allowing 320 parking spaces at the stadium.

This guidance from the Inspector was given three years ago on March 11 1988, but apparently there has been no attempt to organise a Park and Ride system for the football visitors. Wycombe District Council initiated such a scheme for the community at large at Christmas.

There seems no good reason why the football club should not provide such a service for their paying ticket holders. It would alleviate the traffic chaos problem both for their supporters and for local residents. The cost should not be loaded on the already high community charge otherwise it would create a precedent and there would be no end to claims from private companies.

This particular application raises another important issue. It is often overlooked by would-be developers that the local authority has a statutory duty to prevent development of the designated Green Belt and of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The land immediately adjoining the stadium is so designated. There have been numerous applications to develop the local Green Belt/AONB in recent years, not least of them was for an 80-acre motorway service area.

Green belt ceded to one applicant provides precedent for other developments. The end result would be greater building chaos than the existing traffic chaos.

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