

Council cries foul over soccer jibes

I WISH to comment on both the Daily Telegraph article by Mr Parry and the Charles Mann reference to it, published last week. I believe both comments were short-sighted and ignored the long-term situation, which this council is trying to address.

When the original application from the football club to move to Sands was turned down by this council, in my view there were three major reasons. First was the impact on the lives of the local residents; second the lack of car parking spaces to be provided and the public safety issues.

The first two points were inextricably linked. When the application was first made, the car parking spaces provided were enough for the gates that the club were then experiencing. By the time that the Public Inquiry was held the club's gates had doubled. There was, therefore, already an under-provision.

Now, the attendances in recent weeks have been two and a half times the level of those at the time of the public inquiry and indeed have been within a few hundred of the present crowd limit. Therefore, the present crowds are five times those existing at the time of the application and two and a half times those at the time of the inquiry.

No office block application, for example, would be allowed with such a serious deficiency in the number of car parking spaces compared to the capacity of the development.

This means that the impact on the local residents is at an intolerable level and if the club were to maintain their current level of success, or indeed were to become even more successful, as hoped for by Mr Parry and by all their supporters, then this situation would both continue and probably get even worse.

In my view the most important of the reasons is that of public safety. There have been two tragedies at English football grounds in recent years. The inquiry report following the Bradford fire, highlighted that the single access situation to the ground was a contributory factor to the seriousness of the tragedy. There is a single access to Adams Park.

Only a few weeks ago a fire broke out at 3.20pm in one of the neighbouring industrial units. Due both to the co-operation of the crowd and the excellent work of the police, there were no major problems.

This did entail the crowd being kept in the ground for half an hour after the end of the match. What would have happened if the fire had broke out at 2.40pm or at 5pm? Then hundreds, indeed thousands, of people would have been in the road next to the premises on fire.

I am pleased to say that the seriousness of the situation is recognised by the club, this council, the county council and the police, and we are all working together to get a permanent solution which would be to the benefit of the club and the local residents and would also increase the level of public safety.

I for one do not mind being unpopular with Mr Mann, if in fact, the results of my actions mean that in the long term everyone will benefit.

Cllr Andrew D Green
Leader of the Council
Wycombe District Council

Football directors score own goal

ONCE again a director of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club blames Wycombe District Council for their own blunders and once again I feel the need to cry foul.

When drawing up the original planning application, did the directors not realise that they would need car parking for a 6,000-capacity stadium, together with a training pitch?

Did they all stand outside the spanking new ground, scratching their heads, realising that something was missing but they couldn't quite work out what it was?

If the players could pass the ball as well as the directors pass the buck, the team would be looking down the Conference table wondering where the others had got to!

David Thompson
Bradenham Road
High Wycombe

Football pitch inquiry set up

A PLANNING inquiry into the controversial scheme for a training pitch and extra car parking at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club will be held on June 17.

News of the hearing comes after club director and TV sports commentator Alan Parry attacked Wycombe District Council for "turning its back" on the club.

It is the Blues' last chance to win permission for the pitch next to their Adams Park stadium in Hillbottom Road, High Wycombe, after the council turned down the plan last year.

Councillors, who did not want the actual stadium on its present site in the Green Belt, argued the training pitch level would be too high and spoil the views. The club appealed to the Department of the Environment after a second,

By CHRIS DIGNAN

lower version of the pitch was also thrown out.

Some residents fear the pitch will attract more parking problems but the club says it will not be used during match days and the 202 extra parking spaces would help. Some councillors welcome the extra spaces but others say 1,000 more are needed.

The local inquiry will be held in the council chamber, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe. Both sides will put their case to an inspector from the DoE and then wait several months for a decision.

The DoE has already overturned the council's refusal of Adams Park stadium three years ago, but the council says current parking problems show its refusal was right.

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