

It is time council bit the bullet

COUNCILLOR Green's recent letter says the comments of Mr Parry in The Daily Telegraph and Charles Mann are short sighted and ignored the long term situation.

Surely the opposite is the case as the football club long ago realised they needed more parking and so applied for permission to increase the car park size to provide more parking spaces.

The council planning committee refused permission on Green Belt and AONB grounds.

It seems to me that it is the short-sighted outlook of the council which is causing Cllr Green and Cllr Mrs Letheren's constituents to continue to suffer the disruption to which he refers.

The original application to move the football ground some years ago was refused by the council but granted on appeal by the Inspector.

It must be accepted that Adams Park is now built (quite legally and correctly), the club is successful and the crowds attending are nearing the maximum number for which the stadium was granted permission.

So it is no good putting one's head in the sand and hoping the problem will go away. It won't.

The parking is accepted to be insufficient – the solution is to grant permission to the club's application and therefore solve the problem.

I realise the reasons for refusal were Green Belt and AONB grounds and I know how strenuously the council defends its Green Belt and AONB policies.

In the past, the council has given permission for similar requests in the GB and AONB when it was necessary and sensible to do so, eg the extension of the car park for the National Trust at Hughenden Manor and even more recently the large car park and floodlit 200-yard driving range at the council's golf course in Loudwater, both in the Green Belt and AONB and both very sensible decisions.

Why then cannot the council face the problem and for the good of Wycombe district, the football club and those who live near the ground (although the nearest house is about half a mile away) encourage the club to resubmit a very similar application for the car park extension and an all-weather training pitch – and grant it permission?

I have ignored Cllr Green's red herring about the fire risk because it really has nothing to do with a car park extension.

Perhaps Cllr Mrs Peatey got it right when she said "problems have arisen because the new ground is at a site the council did not approve in the first place" – but that should not prevent the planning committee doing all it can to ensure extra parking is provided and so give the football club the support and assistance it deserves, and at the same time relieve the disruption the local residents say they are suffering.

Len Hampton
Thamesfield Gardens
Marlow

Blues' traffic problems multiply

RECENT weeks have seen a vociferous exchange of views over the seemingly insoluble problem of parking at and around Wycombe Wanderers' "into-the-90s" ground Adams Park.

The latest has seen club director and sports commentator Alan Parry clash with Wycombe district councillors, claiming they had refused to co-operate with the club to solve the parking problems.

The council opposed the siting of the ground because of the lack of car parking space, its impact on the local people and because it is on Green Belt land.

Nevertheless, the club obtained permission when they appealed to the Department of the Environment. But hours before the first match kicked-off on August 9 1990, it was apparent that there were going to be problems.

By October, 300 residents had signed a petition and handed it to the council. Six months later Buckinghamshire County Council banned parking in the streets surrounding the ground.

The next initiative was a park-and-ride scheme which kicked-off on the occasion of a big game against Kettering in November. The game pulled a crowd of more than 5,000 (higher than the average gate for a Third Division club) and police reported chaos.

Park

But the park-and-ride scheme has not been taken up particularly well. At a meeting last month council leader Andrew Green said people preferred to park a mile away and walk to the ground rather than pay £1 for the ride.

The county council's parking restrictions had simply moved the problem to areas such as Castlefield. Even offering a school playground as a car park has not worked.

The problem is the biggest one facing the district into the next century. Despite the economic difficulties the town, like its football team, is expanding. But there is nowhere to accommodate growth because High Wycombe is surrounded by land which is protected.

The club will appeal to the Department of the Environment once more after having had an application for a training pitch and 200-space car park turned down by the council because it would be on Green Belt land and it is too high.

The team is trying to win a place in the fourth division and it will not stop competing because there will be no room for the increased crowds that come with success. Press officer Alan Hutchinson said: "There are problems. We accept that. How we solve them we've no idea, at the moment."