

Director hits out at miserly local council

ANGRY Blues director Graham Peart is not paying his bills after Wycombe District Council refused to give the club rate relief.

The council rejected Wanderers' application earlier this month because it did not meet two important criteria for assistance.

But the club's financial director Peart is now refusing to pay all the club's rates, saying: "I only paid 50 per cent because we wanted 50 per cent rate relief. I have refused to pay the other half."

"Every time Wycombe Wanderers have asked for assistance, they have said no."

The council declined to help Blues because they are a semi-professional football club and there are more needy cases in the area.

But Peart asserted: "Most Conference clubs are getting it. Colchester are getting a year's free rent on their ground, worth £138,000. When Yeovil moved grounds at the same time as us, their council purchased and donated the site."

There is also a grey issue over how accessible the club's facilities are to the general public.

Peart believes the club have a case because Wycombe are heavily involved in community projects. They currently run youth teams from the age of Under ten, ladies teams and let High Wycombe Rugby Club use the facilities to promote rugby in the area.

They have also recently appointed reserve team manager Jim Melvin to co-ordinate the club's coaching in schools programme.

Peart said: "I've taken umbridge about this assessment that we don't put anything back into the community."

But other Bucks clubs, including Vauxhall Conference neighbours Farnborough Town, and Diadora League side Aylesbury United, do get rate relief.

Slough Town also find

By STEVE WARREN and PETE LANSLEY

their district council very co-operative.

Farnborough secretary Terry Parr said: "We have a very good relationship with our council. We got rate relief and we also got a £50,000 grant for general ground improvements to meet the criteria of the Conference."

Tony Graham, Aylesbury secretary, said club work in the community helped them get assistance.

"We have got 25 per cent rate relief. We also run a football community development scheme and this is not run as a commercial venture," he told the Bucks Free Press.

Ken Scott, spokesman for the Vauxhall Conference, believed Wycombe ran good community schemes.

He said: "Wycombe's community programme is one of the best in the League. They were one of the only clubs in the league actually to have a community officer."

A spokesman for Wycombe District Council said Wanderers had replied to their rejection and it was currently being considered by council members.

He added: "We are anxious to promote grass roots football. Wycombe and Marlow are not of a grass roots level."

The council will announce their final decision in July.

Blues parking hits new jam

by Star reporter

PEOPLE living in the shadow of Adams Park have attacked plans to build a new car park on their doorsteps.

More than 130 residents were at a public meeting called after news that another car park will almost certainly be built somewhere in the Sands area of High Wycombe.

While Wycombe Wanderers have enjoyed plenty of success in their first two seasons at Adams Park, the big crowds travelling to see them have often created parking chaos.

Sands residents, some saying they are football fans, have suggested the club should make a bigger effort to get the park and ride bus scheme off the ground.

Blues secretary John Goldsworthy replied this week, saying: "We have tried the park and ride scheme and were not supported by the public."

"We didn't just speak about it, we actually put it in action, charged low fares but you can't change people's habits. If people are in the habit of driving to the ground, they are not going to suddenly change."

"The scheme was costing us a lot of money. There was lots of propaganda about park and ride in the programmes but it still didn't work."

Wycombe want an astro-turf practice pitch built on Green Belt land next to the current stadium car park, but the plans have been turned down by Wycombe District Council.

Former Mayor Val Letheren has suggested a 1,000 space car park off Lane End Road, but that was also given the thumbs down at the village hall meeting.

Stephen Billingham, chairman of the Sands meeting, said: "They (the residents) do not want to see a larger car park at the ground, nor do they want to see the green fields off the Lane End Road being turned into a 1,000 space car park!"

A spokesman for Wycombe District Council agreed a car park is needed, but said he wasn't sure what the next step would be.

Residents near soccer pitch club together

RESIDENTS living near Wycombe Wanderers' football ground are organising to object against the club's plans for a practice pitch and a new car park.

More than 130 residents turned out at Sands Village Hall last Thursday and, in a vote taken to gauge opposition to the planned 1,000-

space car park, only one person voted against the motion.

Some of those objecting declared themselves to be football supporters.

Chairman of the meeting Steve Billingham said: "People are obviously very concerned about the impact of the football club's proposed development plans."

The idea of another access road was given lukewarm support, despite fears about Green Belt development.

The meeting ended with a call to form a residents association to represent the interests of the area.

Mr Billingham added: "People in Sands obviously want to have their views heard."