

Wanderers have gone astray

I OFTEN wonder what the sheep who graze in the newly-formed Sands nature reserve on the bank opposite Wycombe Wanderers Football Club must ponder when they see the frantic goings-on once a fortnight or so when the team plays at home!

Having had the privilege of representing the Ward of West Wycombe and Sands on the district council for nearly ten years now, it seems that I have spent much of the time fighting the football club all the way from its original idea to relocate to Sands, to the profile and use this present day.

"I told you so" becomes a very boring phrase after so long and is not constructive, but having grown up a few hundred yards from Arsenal Football Club, and as a child dreading the invasion of armies of fans and their cars to our streets so many years ago, I knew what was in store for the residents before maybe they knew themselves.

It always was a crazy situation to relocate the club out of town down a cul-de-sac with narrow local roads in the immediate vicinity, apart from all the Green Belt considerations.

No one can dispute how much we owe to the club and its amazing success for the pride and pleasure it has brought to so many, even more since it relocated. Division 1 and 20,000 gates must be within reach.

During my term as Mayor of High Wycombe and chairman of the council, the warm hospitality I enjoyed watching some of the matches was second to none. There is a superb facility there, well managed and a credit to all.

The club itself, however, is experiencing tremendous problems with the difficulty of its location and the inconvenience to home and away fans. I think that it is taking a very positive view in looking for solutions, but unless our car-owning community is willing to take to organised public transport in a big way and a site can be available for park-and-ride which is used, they are fighting a losing battle. And what about unsuspecting away fans not realising the parking difficulties.

The residents of Sands have taken a lot of bashing. The new parking regulations are there to help, but are an inconvenience at the same time. The residents fear frustrated fan violence and in my opinion they have been extremely positive in difficult circumstances. Who can envy them? The police are doing a grand job trying to control traffic and have many positive strategies but limited resources.

I cannot but help think that one day the club will have to relocate - but where, and who will foot the bill?

The errant Department of the Environment Inspector who shortsightedly granted the planning permission on appeal has probably long since vanished, especially in the light of the Planning Policy Guidance

now issued to prevent such development in the Green Belt ever again. We are certainly all left with the problem.

Maybe we do have something in common with those sheep ... for we like sheep have gone astray.

Cllr Mrs Valerie A Letheren
Chairman of Planning and
Development Committee
District councillor
West Wycombe and Sands

Cater for kids at Adams Park

I WRITE regarding the segregation of fans for Wycombe Wanderers' home game with York City.

Where the visiting supporters stand, the section is divided in two by a fence. If there are enough away supporters, a gate in the fence is opened to allow access to both sections. In the above game, only one section was in use. This particular fixture was well supported due to the reduction in admission prices for children under 16 to £1.

The woodland terrace was very full with lots of children unable to see due to the numbers of people there. The section next to the away supporters was left empty. I know you have to have segregation of supporters in games, but they could have put some police or stewards in this area as a deterrent in the unlikely event of there being any trouble.

This section could have been used by Wycombe fans or an area for parents with children to stand and enjoy the game more than they were certainly able to in the woodland terrace.

These children are Wycombe supporters of the future and deserve to be able to see a game in as much comfort as possible.

Malcolm Newart
Moorend Lane
Thame