

CHAPTER 13 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

CF01: POLICY FRAMEWORK

PIC 13/1 Objections

0408/33 Ercol Furniture Ltd
0579/25 Michael Lambert

Summary of Objections

- (a) Amend paragraph 13.03; the word 'require' should be replaced with 'seek' in order to reflect advice in Circular 1/97.
- (b) Object to wording. Communities should not be seen as separate to the role of agencies in making provision through partnership.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.0.1 It is important to note that the first objection relates to the wording of the reasoned justification to the Chapter 13 Objectives; not to any of the individual Policies set out later. To the extent that it is an objection to a specific Policy, it is an objection to Policy G3. The proposed change (PIC 13/1) refers to this Policy in the context of paragraph 13.05(iii). This is logical. The evident intention is to seek contributions by developers to necessary community facilities within development areas. The inference is that this will mainly relate to residential development. It is implicit in the wording of Policy G3 (both in its present form and as recommended for modification) and its supporting text that developer contributions will meet the tests of C1/97. All that Policy G3 requires is that, if the relevant contribution cannot be made in kind and on-site, it may be made off-site, in cash and in proportion to the specific needs generated. This methodology seems to be consistent with the Chapter Objectives (i-iv). Whether the form of words employed is 'may seek' or 'may require' seems unimportant as long as the tests of C1/97 are fully applied in all cases.

13.0.2 The objection that relates to local community involvement appears to raise some issues earlier considered under Chapter 2 (General Development). It appears to suggest more active community involvement in the specification of local facilities, approval of the provision made in development proposals and the need to engage communities in the ownership and running of facilities, once provided. It is difficult to see how these aspirations can reasonably be given effect in Local Plan policies. It is indeed possible and perfectly proper to involve local interests in the development briefing process (see Policy G5(2) as recommended for modification). To accord a privileged policy position or special locus to community groups (who may or may not be entirely representative of their communities) would come uncomfortably close to giving them powers of veto over LPA planning decisions. Finally, the actual agency of provision or management of community facilities must remain for the local authorities and voluntary sector to determine, case by case. These are not in any event land use planning matters. For all these reasons, the second objection cannot be supported by means of any change to the wording of the supporting text or Chapter 13 Policies.

RECOMMENDATION

- CF00/1 Modify paragraph 13.03 in accordance with PIC 13/1.

CF1: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Objections

0557/3 Mr J Perkins
1205/4 Princes Risborough Town Council
1584/8 The Marlow Group

Summary of Objections

- (a) The Council should give active support to ensure retention of Youth Club and Day Centre in Princes Risborough.
- (b) Dual use of school buildings should be encouraged.
- (c) Green Belt boundary should be amended to allow for community and residential development, in order to meet the proven need of local organisations and to provide a formal community facility for Marlow Bottom.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.1.1 The purpose of Policy CF1 is to indicate where and when future community facilities may be granted planning permission by whatever agency may be involved. As the LPA rightly point out, it is not the purpose of the Policy to resist land use changes which may result in the loss of such facilities. Such changes are proper land use planning considerations and accordingly are the subject of Policy CF2 (to which no objections have been made). It follows that the future of a site-specific community facility will be considered under Policy CF2 if and when the County Council come to review its continued functioning. In any event, it would not be appropriate for a Local Plan Policy to specify the retention of individual premises, even if the LPA were the agency for their management, which it is not. The County Council appear to be party to the active use of school premises, out of hours and by the community. This is covered by Structure Plan Policy SR2 and is also referred to in the supporting text to Local Plan Policy CF6. Accordingly, no modification requiring 'encouragement' is considered necessary.

13.1.2 The composite proposals for a variety of community facilities, funded by residential development at Marlow Bottom, would conflict with Policy CF1(1)(c) (nb: here as elsewhere the LPA may wish to allocate paragraph numbers and sub-paragraph letters to individual Policies simply to make it easier to cite specific criteria). This aspect of the Policy is in accord with PPG2 which requires that there be 'very special circumstances' and not merely evidence of need to justify Green Belt development. It would not be appropriate to modify a district-wide Policy such as this merely to accommodate a single site-specific objection, however worthy or deserving it might be. From a local community perspective, there may well be a pressing need for additional facilities in this location. Since it is open for the Local Plan preparation and adoption process to modify the detailed boundaries of the previously defined Metropolitan Green Belt, it is possible to do so in the course of adopting the Wycombe District Local Plan. However, this is a matter better considered in the context of objections to Chapter 9 (Green Belt) in view of the close proximity of the settlements of Marlow and Marlow Bottom.

RECOMMENDATION

- CF01/1 No modification.

CF3: COMMUNITY FACILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR STRATEGIC HOUSING SITES

The Objections

1584/7 The Marlow Group

Summary of Objections

- (a) A general indication of the principles on which amounts of contributions are assessed should be made public, together with a clearer description of the nature and extent of the provision of community facilities.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.3.1 The LPA now propose to drop Policy CF3 and its reasoned justification because the latter merely restates (with specific reference to new community facilities in strategic housing allocations) the general intention of seeking Policy G3 developer contributions. This appears logical since it will be here that new facilities are most likely to be needed and where developers will be able and disposed to provide them, in accordance with C1/97 advice. Accordingly, there is no need to modify the wording of the Policy or to make it more explicit, as the objectors would wish. An informal additional comment might be that a statement of principles is not necessary since this is set out in C1/97 and referred to in Policy Q6(a)(iv) of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9). It is not possible to be precise about the nature of the community facilities that will be sought from any developers, apart from those which are specified in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

- CF03/1 Delete paragraphs 13.13-13.14 and Policy CF3 in accordance with PIC 13/2.

CF5: MEETING HALLS AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

The Objections

1042/1 Mr J D Burnham
1400/1 Risborough Christian Fellowship (Rev Martin Rowley).

Summary of Objections

- (a) Amend policy text and delete the word 'large'. In many cases a small number could result in disturbance.
- (b) Request that within the Princes Risborough strategic housing site at Park Mill Farm, an area of land is provided on which to build a place of worship. Facility could be opened up for community use during the week.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.5.1 The LPA point out that two general tests for compliance with Policy CF5 will need to be met in residential areas. One relates to the attraction of 'large numbers' (of worshippers or patrons) and the other to any 'undue disturbance' that may be caused. It is easy to imagine the sorts of invasive effects that may be caused by attendance at places of worship or cultural facilities. There may be, for example, inordinately large numbers of vehicles bringing people from far away if the cultural activity has a particularly large catchment area. Disturbance may

also be caused if, for example, a place of worship is sought by Moslems (or people of other religious faiths) who may want access to it at what might normally be regarded as odd or unsocial hours. In other words, conformity with Policies CF1 and CF5 will need to be tested on a case by case basis. Permission may be granted on a time or capacity-limited basis or, indeed, it may have to be made personal to the applicants. There is accordingly no point in trying to tailor the Policy, at this stage, simply in order to specify a single determinant of acceptability out of many that may well eventually apply.

13.5.2 The objection that requires the Policy to be modified so that a site for a place of Christian worship is reserved and provided cannot be supported. The reasons are several. The first is that Policy CF5 is intended to be district-wide and permissive in character and to set out the framework to judge development proposals in future, as advised by PPG12. The second is that the provision of community facilities is required of the developer in question and is stipulated in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan. In accordance with the advice of C1/97, this provision relates to the needs of the additional residential population and accordingly may be regarded as proportionate and related directly to the housing development. Thirdly, the provision of a place of worship would appear to relate to an existing need rather than a deficiency created by the allocated development. Since the community facility in this case may well turn out to be indoor meeting accommodation, it would be open to the congregation involved to seek its Sunday use for worship, rather than vice versa as they now propose.

RECOMMENDATION

- CF05/1 No modification.

CF6: EDUCATIONAL LAND AND BUILDINGS

The Objections

0579/4	Michael Lambert
0579/5	Michael Lambert
0579/6	Michael Lambert
1201/2	Mr C G Hamilton, Clerk to Downley Parish Council
1201/3	Mr C G Hamilton, Clerk to Downley Parish Council
1663/2	Mrs M Judd

Summary of Objections

- (a) Paragraph 13.23 should set out that the Council will not consider school closure proposals, unless full and effective consultation has been carried out with all residents, and that there is overwhelming support for such a proposal from that community.
- (b) Paragraph 13.23 should be amended to read: 'If a school site is to be redeveloped, the Council expects the retention of a community facility which meets the local needs, to be incorporated within the new development.'
- (c) Paragraph 13.24 should make reference to increasing national concerns and expected Government guidance on the desirability of retaining school open spaces and pitches. The Proposals Map should be kept up to date and Green Space and playing fields should not be built upon. New schools should provide open space to the level required in published service requirements.
- (d) Paragraph 13.24 should be amended to refer to exceptional circumstances, where development is demonstrated as necessary, and that every effort is made to retain a

substantial proportion of Green Space or playing field. If not all of the original Green Space or playing field is retained on site, an alternative provision of equivalent quality must be provided.

- (e) The policy poorly identifies the value and importance of local schools in local communities.
- (f) Policy CF6, that requires community provision for public use to be incorporated into redevelopment proposals, contradicts Policy CF5 that does not allow for attracting large number of people or undue disturbance.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.6.1 National planning guidance in PPG17 (paragraphs 41-44) relates specifically to the retention of school playing fields where schools continue to be used for their original purpose. It suggests that the change of use by redevelopment of such playing fields should be resisted unless equivalent sports provision is made. The purpose of Policy CF6 is slightly different. In a situation where schools are currently being amalgamated by the local education authority (LEA) the Policy seeks to retain those premises and those open space facilities that serve a community need or function at present. This is a proper land use planning purpose. It would not be right to accede to the objection that requires overwhelming community support for school closure. Quite apart from the fact that such support is unlikely to be forthcoming, it is for the LEA initially to decide on the best pattern of local education. It is then for the LPA to determine that school premises may be closed or put to alternative use, having regard to the new pattern of school provision and, in particular, its relative accessibility by all modes of travel, including safe and secure walking routes. This is what the first paragraph of Policy CF6 sets out to ensure. Consultation would be carried out as for any planning application.

13.6.2 The second paragraph of Policy CF6 would apply where the LPA is generally satisfied that the redevelopment of school premises is justified. What the Policy then requires is the equivalent replacement of any existing community facilities (by implication indoor facilities) in the scheme of redevelopment that is proposed. The objections to paragraph 13.23 would appear to be met by PIC 13/5 and is accordingly endorsed. On the other hand, objections to paragraph 13.24 seem slightly to miss the point of the Policy. Policy CF6 is not directed at the retention of school open space and playing fields, as such. As PIC13/3 makes clear, the loss of playing fields and other sports facilities is better covered by Policy RT3. That being the case, the thrust of the above objections has already been considered under Policies RT1-RT3 in Chapter 12 and recommendations made. The LPA quite clearly recognises the value to the community of facilities provided by school premises; it is not for the Policy to play an advocacy role in their retention. There is no inherent conflict between Policies CF5 and CF6. It is probable that any local community use of premises already generates visits by the public. To the extent that this may be increased by redevelopment the twin tests of 'large numbers' and 'undue disturbance' (see CF5 above) would certainly apply.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CF06/1 Modify paragraph 13.23 in accordance with PICs 13/3 and 13/5.
- CF06/2 Modify Policy CF6 in accordance with PIC 13/5.

CF7: TRAFFIC GENERATED BY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

The Objections

0158/49 High Wycombe and Marlow Green Party

0579/7	Michael Lambert
0579/8	Michael Lambert
0579/9	Michael Lambert
1042/2	Mr J D Burnham

Summary of Objections

- (a) Paragraph 13.25 and Policy should make a clear distinction between infant, primary and secondary schools. The promotion of alternatives to car journeys should be accompanied by agreements to cover residents' parking zones and the enforcement of these.
- (b) Paragraph 13.27 should only apply to secondary schools.
- (c) Amend the policy wording; replace the words 'to facilitate' with 'to require'.
- (d) Restraint is needed in new school building and where educational expansion is planned, to ensure that it does not exacerbate traffic and parking problems.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.7.1 The evident concern of the objectors is a reflection of the unwelcome fact that access by children to schools is fraught with problems of traffic congestion, danger and parental anxiety. These problems have been greatly exacerbated over the past 20 years by several factors. One is the tendency to amalgamate schools so that premises may be increasingly far from pupils' homes. The second is the progressive erosion of the school catchment concept in favour of greater parental choice. The third is the growth of car ownership and, in particular, the increase in the number of households owning two or more cars and hence the practice of children being driven to and from school by parents. The available statistics suggest that Wycombe District is typical of all these national and long-standing trends. To counter the problems that arise, the LPA must rely principally (but not exclusively) on land use planning controls. As the LPA recognises, certain traffic planning measures such as controlled parking zones (CPZs) are not at present within its direct control and management. However, since the LEA and highway authority are one and the same, it might well be possible to strengthen the Policy relative to agreed and necessary local traffic management matters.

13.7.2 There is little point in differentiating, either in the text or the Policy itself, as between infant, primary and secondary schools. Much will depend on the situation of the school, the layout of its surroundings and its catchment characteristics. The problems addressed by Policy CF7 have three essential components. In no particular order of priority, these are as follows. One is the loss of local mobility and inconvenience to local residents caused by private car traffic bringing children to school and the temporary parking of vehicles. The second is the danger, delays and inconvenience to all pedestrian traffic, primarily but not exclusively child pedestrian traffic, created by this growing amount of car movement and parking. The third is the need to accommodate the essential needs for easy access, operational parking and servicing space within the confines of the school grounds for teachers, other members of the school staff and delivery personnel. These problems can be mitigated by internal layout of parking, pedestrian circulation and access points (which are primarily land use planning considerations) and by detailed neighbourhood road layout, CPZ regimes, traffic calming and reduction (which are mainly for the local highway authority to initiate and approve).

13.7.3 With regard to parking, much will depend on the location and accessibility of the premises. These will be determined by reference to Appendices 9 and 10. The resultant scale of parking and servicing needs will be assessed in accordance with Table 5.1 (xii-xiii). These are straightforward planning control matters that will necessarily take into account the extent and disposition of any available car and secure cycle parking and servicing provision, its suitability of access and so forth. All these matters are fully covered by Policies T3 and T8 (see Chapter 7) and there is no need to mention them in Policy CF7; the simple cross-reference in

paragraph 13.27 is quite enough, possibly extended to cover Policy T8. As far as Green Travel Plans are concerned (the subject of Policy T18) these probably do not merit explicit mention in either text or policy. The reason is that the LPA and LEA are investigating safer routes to school on a continuing basis and the formulation of Green Travel Plans is probably not so closely related to school expansion as the other policy concerns. On the other hand, any school expansion will certainly need to take account of Policy T15 and a cross reference to this would serve to add emphasis to the modified Policy CF7 wording now recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CF07/1 Modify paragraph 13.26 by inserting a cross-reference to Policy T15.
- CF07/2 Modify paragraph 13.27 by inserting a cross-reference to Policy T8(1).
- CF07/3 Modify Policy CF7 to read as follows:

POLICY CF7

(1) THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS RESULTING IN A SIGNIFICANT OR INCREASED NUMBER OF PUPILS OR STUDENTS ATTENDING ON A REGULAR BASIS WILL ONLY BE APPROVED OR AUTHORISED WHERE SUITABLE MEASURES ARE IN PLACE (OR ARE PROPOSED) IN ORDER TO ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE THE WIDER USE OF COLLECTIVE OR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT ON FOOT OR BY CYCLE. THESE MEASURES MAY INCLUDE, AS APPROPRIATE, IMPROVED OR ADDITIONAL ACCESS POINTS FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS AND PRIORITY ROUTES AND ACCESS FOR BUSES AND COACHES.

(2) BEFORE APPROVING OR AUTHORIZING ANY EXPANSION OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS, IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO RECEIVE UNDERTAKINGS FROM, OR TO CONCLUDE AGREEMENTS WITH, THE LEA OR OTHER AGENCIES TO SECURE THE CARRYING OUT OF SUITABLE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES TO PROTECT LOCAL PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST MOVEMENT, BY MEANS OF ROAD CLOSURES, PARKING CONTROLS AND SPEED REDUCTION MEASURES EITHER BEFORE OR AS SOON AS THE EXPANSION OF THE PREMISES TAKES PLACE.

CF8: PROPOSED LIBRARY AT FLACKWELL HEATH

The Objections

0526/3 *Chepping Wycombe Parish Council*
0818/1 *Buckinghamshire County Council – Land & Property*
2130/1 *Peter & Polly Read*

PIC 13/4 Objections

0526/36 *Chepping Wycombe District Council*
2128/1 J A Brown (16 signature petition appended)
2131/1 Stephen A'Court
2300/1 I L Hobbs (700 signature petition appended)

Summary of Objections

- (a) Site should be designated as Green Space, as it currently performs this important role and meets the criteria set out in Policy L3.
- (b) Object to policy for a new library, now that provision has been made for the establishment of a new library at Carrington Middle School. Policy should be deleted and site designated as residential.
- (c) Object to Pre Inquiry Change (PIC 13/4) to allocate the site as residential.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.8.1 The site which is currently allocated under Policy CF8 for branch library development is very near the centre of the somewhat elongated settlement of Flackwell Heath. It adjoins a local community centre and a small Local District Centre, the latter protected by Policy S5. It is also very near the edge of the Sheepridge (Flackwell Heath) Conservation Area which presumably covers the nucleus and oldest part of the settlement. The LPA, supported by the Chepping Wycombe Parish Council and local residents, wish to alter the allocation to one under Policy L3 (Green Space) despite the fact that it is below the decare (1000 sq m) lower limit prescribed in the reasoned justification (paragraph 10.13) of the Policy. The LPA consider that this would accord with PPG3 and PPG17 advice concerning the retention of open space which has either recreational, townscape or community functions. The County Council object to that and ask that it be designated as residential, presumably because of its development potential. The site previously enjoyed residential planning permission but is now in active public open space use.

13.8.2 On inspection, the site was found to be very centrally located and admirably suited to its present function. It complements the adjacent land uses of shopping and community centre and its use and appearance are consistent with the designation of the nearby conservation area. Flackwell Heath is reasonably well endowed with open space allocated under Policy L3 and is set in attractive country, the subject of Green Belt, AONB and Policy L2 protection. There is a fair amount of public access by definitive rights of way to and through the latter but such access to the other Policy L3 areas is not especially generous. Accordingly, the advice of PPG17 (paragraphs 25-31 in particular) points to the retention of the open space, despite its being only 770 sq m in extent. In view of its suitability for this function and its contribution to the urban scene, it rather calls into doubt the wisdom of setting a more or less arbitrary lower limit to Policy L3 protection. The matter has been discussed earlier (see Chapter 10) but the LPA may again wish to reconsider the insertion of the limit under PIC 10/7. The site would not support any significant amount of housing and its shape would make such development unduly prominent and intrusive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CF08/1 Delete paragraph 13.28 and Policy CF8.
- CF08/2 Modify the Local Plan in accordance with PICs 13/4, M/21, PMAP/11 and M/53.

CF9: BURIAL GROUNDS

The Objections

0905/6	Kenneth Barnes
1061/1	Wycombe District Association of Local Councils
1205/3	Princes Risborough Town Council
1584/4	The Marlow Group
1779/6	Frederick Harrold

Summary of Objections

- (a) The Council should recognise the need for a new burial facility in the North of the District and make provision for a suitable site for a cemetery. The issue requires resolving before development of the proposed strategic housing site at Princes Risborough. Reference is made to supporting a site at Shootacre Lane.
- (b) Policy is vague and incomprehensible.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.9.1 The LPA does not consider that any modification of Policy CF9 is necessary in the light of the two objections. The Policy is intended to lay down criteria for the location and layout of new or extended burial grounds in the District. Implementation of such development is usually a third-tier local government function, in consultation with Wycombe DC. The use of land for public burial is normally considered acceptable in both Green Belt areas and AONB. There are accordingly few planning constraints in the acquisition and development of land for this purpose. The Town Council concerned has recently been in liaison with the LPA and an early planning application will evidently be made. It would seem, as the LPA claim, that formal identification of any burial site would be premature and unhelpful. It might also complicate the eventual compulsory purchase of land for this use by attracting a purchase notice to which the LPA would have to respond on behalf of the acquiring authority. The wording of the Policy seems perfectly clear, concise and explicit and to accord with the advice of PPG12.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CF09/1 No modification.

CF10: POLICY OMISSION

The Objections

1207/3	Residents' Action Group on Gomm Valley
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Summary of Objections

- (a) Object to the lack of a specific policy that sets out the importance of maintaining community identity, including the physical separation of different communities.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

13.10.1 The purpose of Chapter 13 of the Local Plan (paragraph 13.05) is to provide a framework within which necessary physical facilities and amenities may be provided. It is not the purpose of the Local Plan, under this heading at least, to establish the geographical limits of

communities within Wycombe District. There is an objective set out (13.05(iv)) which aims to 'contribute to local identity and a sense of place'. What this appears to mean is that people living in a recognisable community should be able to find necessities of daily life, such as local health facilities, meeting halls and so forth, within or close to their physical surroundings. The objection by the Gomm Valley Action Group cannot therefore be supported by the addition of another Policy in Chapter 13.

13.10.2 The Group's aim is to clearly to safeguard the identity of the established residential character of Tylers Green. It is also to resist new development that might lead to coalescence with the larger residential enclave on the other side of the Gomm Valley. A sense of historic and topographical identity is plainly evident in the designated extent of Tylers Green Conservation Area, to say nothing of the defined edge of the Green Belt to the south. Whilst the objectors' case must invite sympathy, it would be inappropriate to try to define community boundaries district-wide or to insert an area-specific Policy in Chapter 13. The objectors may indeed look to Policies G4-G6 (modified as recommended) to protect their interests in their pursuit of local autonomy.

13.10.3 Earlier in the report (paragraph 5.0.2) it was noted that quite sizeable urbanised areas in Wycombe District were lacking policy protection as far as retail facilities were concerned. This has been to an extent redressed by proposed changes to Policy S5. In this, five local district centres are specified. It may be that an additional policy in either Chapters 5 or 13 ought to be included to safeguard the local service facilities and hence the autonomy and identity of certain areas or communities. Since these facilities commonly include public houses and other local services as well as shops, it might be argued that Chapter 13 would be the best and most appropriate part of the Local Plan. It is certainly the case that such facilities are under a degree of pressure from unwelcome planning applications for change of use, typically to residential. However, this matter was not the subject of a specific objection. It only obliquely bears on the objection raised by the Gomm Valley Residents. For that reason, no formal recommendation is made. The LPA may wish to consider this possible gap in policy coverage at a suitable stage in the future review of the Wycombe District Local Plan or its successor.

RECOMMENDATION

- CF10/1 No modification.