

TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT WORKING PAPER

VILLAGE GREEN ISSUES

1. HISTORY & STATUS

- The former Eton Rural District Council acquired the westerly portion of the land from the executors of Mewton in 1962. The same Council in 1966 purchased the remaining land to the east fronting the High Street. At the time this piece of land was under threat of being used for housing. The original conveyance document for the west side of the Green includes a sketch map drawn by the Eton Rural District Engineer's Department that shows a total 6 houses on the east side of the Green.
- Following the acquisitions of what is now the Village Green the Parish Council carried out clearance of the various old buildings on the site and followed up with seeding and tree planting schemes.
- A 25 year agreement to lease the Green from Beaconsfield District Council (the successor to Eton Rural District Council) was signed by Taplow Parish Council in 1976.
- The Green is still leased to Taplow Parish Council by SBDC
- The current lease is to run for 99 years from July 1st 2001
- The continuation of the lease is subject to a number of covenants regarding use and condition
- The overarching policy defined in the Lease is that the Green is a Public Open Space provided as an amenity for the whole community

2. MAJOR ISSUES

The use of the Green - Residents' views

- Some of the residents of properties surrounding the Green are concerned at the use of the Green after School by increasing numbers of school children and for increasing lengths of time
- residents are concerned at the increasing use of the Green by the Playgroup as well as other organisations such as the cubs
- associated with the increasing use is a perception that those who live in the Village are being denied the use of the Green at certain times of the day
- the increasing use has meant an increase in noise and general disturbance
- there are serious concerns about children's safety particularly associated with ball games and children running off the bank onto Rectory Road where drivers' would have no sight line
- the surface of the Green is being eroded away by children playing ball games
- trees and shrubs are being damaged by schoolchildren
- litter is being dropped and not picked up by schoolchildren
- the schoolchildren are subject to insufficient supervision
- the use of the Green after evening events has been particularly controversial
- some residents in the Village have established an association to articulate and represent their views and concerns

The Use of the Green - Parent's views

- the majority of parents feel that as a Public Open Space the Green belongs to everybody and the residents have no special rights on its use
- parents feel there is adequate supervision

Polarisation of views

- Through out this summer term there has been an increasing polarisation of views on both sides with a siege mentality developing
- The residents feel disenfranchised and the parents feel they are being unjustifiably attacked and their children picked on

Results of polarisation

- The polarisation of attitudes whether justified or not has led to incidents that have resulted in police involvement
- Direct contact between residents and children is being considered increasingly provocative by parents

Associated problems

Parking

- As well as problems associated with the use of the Green there are increasing problems with parking associated with the School at the start and end of the school day.
- There is totally inadequate parking for staff and visitors within the school premises
- The capacity for parking at the Village Centre cannot cope with demand from the School
- The parking of school traffic limits the amount of parking available for Village Centre users causing problems
- The Village Centre Car Park is not laid out in a way compatible with 4 by 4's and MPV's – the bays and the manoeuvring space are too small
- Parking along the approach road to village Centre Car Park frequently blocks the entrance to School House causing considerable inconvenience
- Parking throughout the Village associated with the School causes considerable inconvenience to residents
- The parking of cars at School time presents a safety hazard not only in terms of reduced visibility but also contributing to gridlock when dropping off and leaving times coincide with other events eg filming, weddings or funerals

3. REMEDIES

Remedies currently being undertaken by the School

- A Travel Plan is being drafted
- The involvement of the Local Community Liaison Officer has been sought to patrol the area at the beginning and end of the School day
- The School have liaised with the Highways Dept and sought their advice about road markings and/ or pedestrian schemes
- During June families have been encouraged to use the 'Walk to School Week' to raise awareness of the need to minimise pollution, reduce the number of cars travelling to school.
- The 'Go for Gold – Bike Week challenge' was used to encourage cycling to School
- School Staff have liaised with SBDC Rights of Way Office to keep footpaths clear
- Parents are constantly reminded about careless and inappropriate parking
- Community groups using the School have been given access to the School Car Park
- Parents are reminded regularly of their responsibility for their children's behaviour
- Members of the School Council and the Headmistress have made a commitment to join the 'Friends of the Green' interest group. The School Council will bring the issues raised to the children's attention
- The School had consulted during the last 5 years on a scheme to increase the parking capacity within the School premises but local residents objected to the creation of additional parking spaces in the School grounds

Remedies being investigated by the Parish Council

A working group of Councillors is being set up answerable to the General Purposes Committee as well as Full Council to consider the implementation of the following Short Term & Long Term Measures :

Short Term

- The Council is in constant contact with the School and will be discussing proposals with them over the rest of the summer
- To eliminate one source of flash points the possibility of having a designated supervisor of the children playing on the Green after School is being investigated. This person would not only monitor children's behaviour but also act as the point of contact for residents' immediate concerns. This would obviate the need to approach children directly, a hazardous enterprise in current times.
- To suggest to the Vicar that timings of Weddings and Funerals do not coincide with School Leaving times during the Summer and that participants be warned of the problems if events overrun.
- Make a particular emphasis that the use of the Green after evening events at the School are a particular cause for residents
- Inform the School that cycling is not allowed on the Green – it may be necessary for a notice to be put up to this effect
- Monitor the situation re other users over the School holidays
- Ask police for a presence at opening and closing of School
- Reseed parts of the Green that need resurfacing – cordoning areas in process of improvement
- Put in place a planting scheme including thickening the hedge and improving the planters
- Put the statement about hiring not including the Green on the signing form in large letters and also include rules regarding the use of the Green
- Consider the merits of introducing regulations to control use of the Green
- Consider what regulations should be introduced

Long Term

- Continue investigating the possibility of moving the parking away from the School altogether, as proposed in the Parish Plan, eg the Cricket Ground Car Park if the owners are willing & the School are willing to provide escorts
- Consider restricting use of the Village Centre Car Park and the likely knock-on effects such a policy would have
- Examine any problems associated with increasing parking capacity at the School
- Restrict parking within the Village to reduce possibility of deadlock
- Continue looking at ways to reduce rat running through the Village
- Consider restricting the hiring of the Hall for children's parties during the Summer months

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