

Standish Neighbourhood Development Plan

2026–2040

**Pre-Submission Draft
(Regulation 14)**

**Community Facilities
Evidence Paper 5**

June 2026

**Standish
Parish
Council**





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1. Introduction: Scarcity and Value

Standish Parish presents a classic rural paradox: it is officially classified as “countryside” and is “amongst the most sparsely populated parishes in the District”, yet this very sparsity imbues its limited community facilities with an outsized importance. In an urban context, the loss of a single facility might be an inconvenience; in Standish, it can represent a catastrophic loss of a vital social node, eroding community cohesion and resilience.

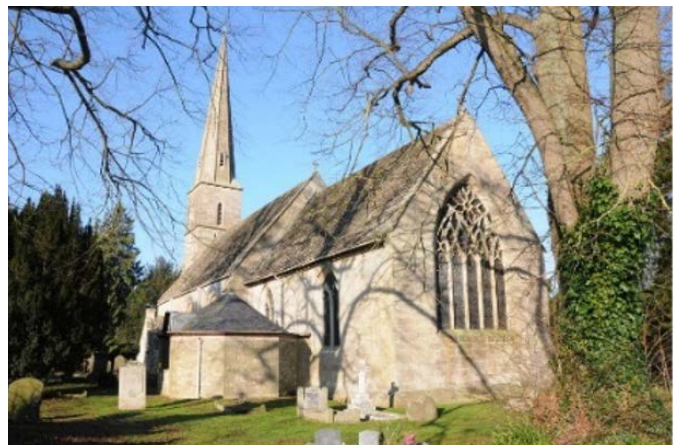


Policy 5 is a justified strategic defence mechanism. It recognises that the parish’s social infrastructure is as fragile and valuable as its environmental assets. The policy is designed to perform two critical functions: to protect the existing, often multi-functional, community assets that form the bedrock of parish life; and to strategically manage the introduction of new facilities generated by major growth, ensuring they integrate sensitively and add genuine value.

2. The Evidence Base: A Multi-faceted Understanding of “Facility”

The policy is grounded in a sophisticated audit that moves beyond a simplistic list of buildings to embrace a holistic view of what constitutes a ‘community facility’ in a rural context:

- **Formal built facilities:** The Village Hall (Church House) and Standish Church are the primary enclosed spaces for social gathering, events, and cultural activities. Their continued viability is non-negotiable for community health.
- **Informal and green social spaces:** The policy identifies the village green, churchyard, planned natural play area at Green Walk, and the Stagholt allotments and planned natural green space as critical community facilities. These are spaces for unstructured play, quiet contemplation, recreation, and food production, activities essential to wellbeing and community interaction.
- **The “wider parish as a facility”:** By valuing the open countryside, public rights of way, and National Trust lands (Standish Wood, Haresfield Beacon), the policy acknowledges that in a rural area, the landscape itself is the primary recreational and amenity facility. This aligns the policy with landscape and environmental objectives, creating a cohesive planning framework.



This nuanced evidence base demonstrates that the community’s needs are met by a delicate ecosystem of assets, all of which require protection.



Haresfield Beacon.



View from Haresfield Beacon.



Standish Village Hall and Village Green.

3. The Strategic Context: From Reactive to Proactive Management

Policy 5 operates within a clear hierarchy of planning policy but provides the essential local specificity that higher-level plans lack:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** Policy 5 gives practical effect to the NPPF’s social objective of supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities (NPPF, paragraph 8), including the creation of inclusive and accessible places that contribute positively to the social environment of Standish.
- **Stroud District Local Plan Core Policy CP15 (A quality living and working countryside):** CP15 sets the high-level test for development in the countryside. Policy 5 provides the detailed, parish-specific criteria against which proposals for community facilities must be assessed, ensuring they are appropriate to Standish’s rural character.
- **Addressing the strategic growth impact:** Policy 5 is forward-looking, explicitly acknowledging the profound demographic shift that will be caused by the 700-dwelling PS19a allocation. It welcomes the necessary new facilities (the 1.5-form-entry primary school, recreation space) but establishes a robust framework to ensure they are delivered in a way that mitigates their potential negative impacts.

4. The Policy Mechanism: A Robust and Defensible Framework

Policy 5's strength lies in its clear, logical, and defensible criteria for both protection and new provision.

a. Safeguarding existing facilities: the “double test” for loss

The policy does not impose an absolute prohibition on change, which would be unrealistic and undeliverable. Instead, it establishes a rigorous, evidence-based ‘double test’ that must be passed before the loss of a facility is considered:

1. **Proof of non-viability:** The applicant must demonstrate a clear lack of viability over an agreed period, preventing the speculative closure of a facility based on short-term financial pressures.
2. **Proof of adequate alternative provision:** It must be shown that the needs served by the facility are met elsewhere within the parish. This is a very high bar in a sparsely populated area with few alternatives.

This framework protects facilities from speculative development while allowing for change where it is genuinely justified, making the policy sound and resistant to legal challenge.

b. Managing new facilities: the “sustainable integration” criteria

For new facilities, the policy establishes a set of clear, objective criteria to ensure they enhance rather than harm the parish. These criteria directly address the potential conflicts that can arise from new development in a sensitive rural area:

- **Amenity:** Prevents noise, light, and traffic nuisance from undermining the tranquillity of existing residents.
- **Environmental protection:** Ensures new buildings or intensively used spaces do not damage the prized landscape character, biodiversity or habitats.
- **Transport and infrastructure:** Manages the additional traffic and parking demands on the constrained rural highway network (notably the B4008) and protects against flooding and water quality issues.
- **Inclusivity:** The requirement that facilities are “open to all residents” is crucial for social cohesion, ensuring that new facilities in PS19a serve the entire, expanded parish community and do not create a social schism between old and new residents.

5. The Role of the Parish Council: Enabling and Stewarding

The policy implicitly positions the Parish Council as the central steward of the parish’s social infrastructure. Through its management of the village green, its engagement with the Village Hall Management Committee and the Parochial Church Council (or Team Rector), and its role in agreeing on evidence of non-viability, the Parish Council is established as the democratically accountable body best placed to understand and defend the community’s social needs.

6. Conclusion: An Integrated and Vital Policy

Policy 5 is a vital component of the Standish Neighbourhood Development Plan, justified by:

1. **A holistic evidence base:** It recognises and values the full spectrum of community assets, from buildings to landscapes.
2. **Strategic foresight:** It proactively manages the significant social change brought by strategic housing growth.
3. **A legally sound and balanced approach:** It protects existing facilities with a robust, evidence-based test and guides new provision with clear, objective criteria.
4. **Community stewardship:** It empowers the local community to define and protect the social fabric that makes Standish a distinct and cohesive place.

In essence, this policy ensures that as Standish grows, it does not merely add houses, but grows as a community, safeguarding the valued spaces that foster social interaction, wellbeing, and a shared sense of identity for both existing and future resident.

