

Mortimer Station, Mortimer, West Berkshire

The purpose of this note is:

- *to outline the background to parking issues in and around Mortimer Station,*
- *to update MPC and Ward Members on progress, and*
- *to confirm the options and next steps*

An updated note will be produced (once some of the next steps have been completed) which can form the basis of further discussion between the interested parties (Members, MPC, WBC, NR and FGW).

Background and issues:

Parking by commuters using Mortimer Station has begun to cause concern for nearby residents and Mortimer Parish Council (MPC) have raised this with the local authority. The issue is the increase in vehicles being parked on the roadside close to the station. The road in question, The Street, is in close proximity to the station, where over 20 vehicles are parked daily.

Mortimer Station itself offers 51 spaces, charging £3.20 (£2.90 if paying by mobile) per day prior to 10am, and £54 monthly. The station is located approximately 1.5 kilometres away from the main settlement of Mortimer (see figure 1). The station is serviced by a community bus service aimed at commuters, however, this is threatened to cease activity due to a shortfall of funding (approx £6000). If this bus service were to cease, it is envisaged that parking issues could be exacerbated for the station.

The issue was brought to the attention of West Berkshire Council (WBC) in March 2013, and a number of discussions have taken place amongst stakeholders, including WBC, MPC, First Great Western (FGW) and Network Rail (NR). In a meeting on the 17th April 2013 held by MPC, Andrew Garratt of WBC addressed the meeting, outlining the step-by-step processes required for the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to discourage parking along The Street. MPC members were advised that as there is a statutory process to follow, it could take up to 12 months to implement the TRO. The initial proposal put forward was for no waiting at any time to be implemented along stretches of The Street, addressing the junction with Station Road, and further westbound (see figure 2).

A meeting was held between WBC, NR, FGW, and MPC to discuss the issues at Mortimer Station on 23rd May 2013. The meeting identified parking had become a problem since August 2012, though the reason for this was not known. As well as road safety concerns, this has caused issues for accessing a Thames Water compound from a lay-by on The Street which is often blocked. One key problem identified was that parking in the station car park could only be paid for with cash when the ticket office was open, otherwise the use of a mobile phone is required to pay for parking. It is not clear whether charges, the ease of payment or general capacity issues (or a combination of all three) are pushing people out to park on The Street.

Update on possible solutions:

One proposal to introduce traffic management measures along The Street is progressing and the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has been advertised. There were some objections to the TRO and these have been considered and addressed in the report for an Individual Decision by the Executive Member for Highways and Transport. This was signed on 30th September and it is hoped that this order will be implemented in October / November 2013.

A proposal put forward was for increased provision of parking at the station, either through an extension of the existing car park or a new car park on a suitable site. The Team Leader of the Eastern Development Control Team has visited Mortimer with this in mind and has confirmed (without prejudice) that the field adjacent to the existing station car park to the north west is likely to be an acceptable site to be used for additional parking (see figure 2). This could present the opportunity to provide a safer access point to the station by moving it further north away from the bridge over the railway as visibility over this bridge is poor due to the gradient of approach. It is agreed that an additional 30 spaces would be a suitable requirement for expansion. Such a proposal would require a feasibility study, with up-to-date passenger information and study of parking behaviour.

Some ad-hoc observations have been made by WBC officers and are included in the table below. These observations will be added to.

Table 1 - Parking Observations

Date	17/05/13	11/06/13	14/08/13	21/08/13
Unoccupied spaces at Station (51 available)	Spaces available	16	13	6
Cars parked on The Street	Parked vehicles observed	19	17	12
Comments	Observation on 17 th May, approx 1630 with the car park not at full capacity, with parking on The Street.	Vehicles parked on the street would exceed the station by three spaces. Observation made at 1655.	Parking on The Street exceeds capacity at the station by four spaces. Observed at approx 0900.	Parking on The Street exceeds capacity at the station by six spaces. Observed at approx 1330.

Some options for the continued provision of the commuter bus service have been progressed by Public Transport Officers at WBC. MPC and Ward Members are involved in this process.

Potential Actions:

A greater level of detailed information is required to understand occupancy rates at Mortimer Station car park and the number of people parking along the length of The Street. A simple count of vehicles parked at the station and on

The Street during a normal working week has been proposed for September, commencing 23rd September. This will help identify if morning commuters are unable to park in the station due to spaces being unavailable, or are using The Street as a method to avoid parking charges. The study will be undertaken between 0900 and 0930, across the week Monday to Friday during non-school holidays in order to develop a more detailed picture of parking issues.

The count would be completed by 0930 each morning, as these vehicles will primarily be for commuters travelling into Reading and beyond. After 0930, fares become reduced and so may attract less-frequent travellers, as would the daily reduction in the parking charge at the station by 10am. It is a priority to identify the impact of daily commuters prior to understanding the demand for parking by shorter-stay and infrequent station users.

Upon completion of this study, a survey could be undertaken of all car users accessing Mortimer Station, both those parking in the station car park, and on The Street. A simple survey of passengers using the commuter mini-bus could also be undertaken. From this, a detailed level of information could be gathered about station users, including final destination, journey purpose, and parking behaviour. This information would be helpful for all stakeholders and help to:

- identify what the most appropriate course of action would be in relation to the possible expansion of parking provision at Mortimer,
- provide detailed evidence in relation to the commuter mini-bus service and any likely new travel patterns that would result if a service was not provided
- aid any opportunity for further station improvements.

Other thoughts:

The solution of an extended car park or new car park may not be a simple one to implement and will require significant funding. If the survey work indicates that this is the right course of action then issues such as land ownership, flooding etc will need to be investigated. If the undersupply of parking is less than thought then it may be an easier and more cost effective solution to work with NR and FGW to reconfigure the existing car park at the station, as well as the installation of a pay and display machine on site.

The implementation of a TRO along The Street would not guarantee vehicles transferring to the station car park (when there is capacity), as some drivers may seek an alternative area where no parking fees exist. This transfer of parking from one location to another may cause problems in the future, possibly worse than those which currently exist. Therefore, it is important to identify the choices behind parking behaviour by commuters on The Street.

Figure 1 – Map of Mortimer showing Station position in relation to the main settlement

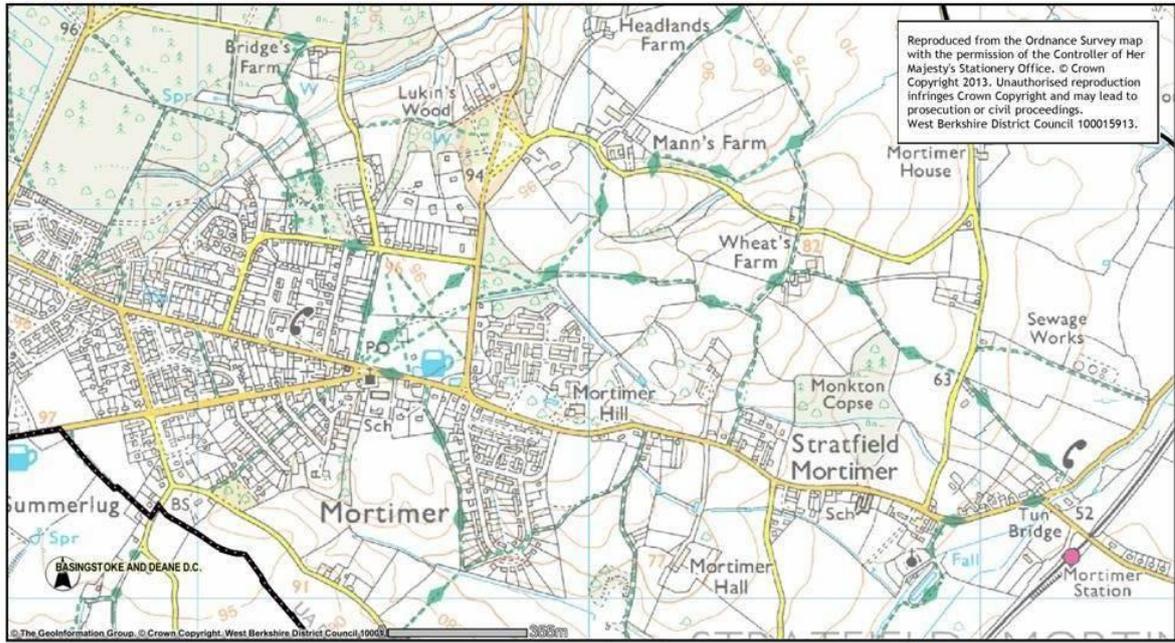


Figure 2 – Mortimer Station area with key proposals

