

# STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter Autumn 2018



St Mary's Church Mortimer

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council



## Rights of Way

How many paths in Mortimer do you think are protected? By protected we mean the public have a legally protected right to pass and re-pass. There is a definitive map that is held by West Berkshire that marks all paths that are protected but we think there are others. So why are we telling you this.



As we all know building space is becoming a premium in the area and developers will try and use as much space as possible. If they fence off or move a border to close a path if it is not on the definitive map then there is little that can be done to stop it. Across the UK the Country Side Agency estimate that over 10% of paths are not registered. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 states that paths that are not recorded on this map by 2026 will automatically be deemed not a footpath.

The Parish Council has been made aware of three footpaths which are not on the definitive map. These are:

- 1) **Between 2 and 4 Windmill Road through to The Bevers,**
- 2) **The junction of Victoria Road and Stephens Road through to Stephens Firs.**
- 3) **Between 34 and 35 Stephens Close through to Alfred Palmer Memorial Ground.**

If you know of any other paths that are not marked on the definitive map then please let the Parish Clerk know.

<https://gis1.westberks.gov.uk/ApplicationTemplates/OnlineMap/?vln=PUBLIC%20RIGHTS%20OF%20WAY>

The relevant test is whether there is satisfactory evidence that for a period of at least 20 years there has been uninterrupted use by the public. The Parish Council therefore requests that if any members of the public are able and willing to sign a statement to this effect they should contact the Clerk.

Also if you know of any other paths that are not marked on the definitive map then also please let the Parish Clerk know.

## Is SPEED an issue ?

Like it or not Speeding is an issue. This is not just a Mortimer problem it is a nation wide problem. In days gone by cars were harder to drive at speed, but as technology advances it can be almost like sitting in you living room when driving a car. They supress the influences of outside circumstances. Sound deadening, smooth suspension and power have greatly improved. In an old Ford Anglia you would know you were driving at 40mph, in the luxury of a modern car its very easy to switch off and be driving at 40mph plus.

### A few facts.

If a child is struck by a car at:

**30mph they have an 80% chance of survival.**

**35mph they have a 50% chance of survival.**

**40mph they have an 80% chance of Death !**



The Parish Council has taken on board the concerns of local residents and has been working hard with West Berkshire Council who recognise that "**there is a problem**" in some areas of Mortimer.

St Catherine's Hill is one area where a white box on a tripod has been seen. We can report that this is a Speed Camera which captures number plates. WBC and TVP have installed a temporary ANPR camera. This camera has recorded numerous vehicles speeding and the owners will be getting letters from TVP. The knock on effect of these letter, if repeated, is that the owners car can be impounded.

Cars have been recorded in excess of 46mph along this stretch of road. Some of the cars are commuters using the route as a cut through, but more worryingly some of the cars are from the local area. People need to be aware of the facts above. As more houses are built in the area, more children maybe playing on the streets. Children under the age of 13 cannot judge speed of cars as well as adults and may run out to get a ball, not realising the fact a car is coming towards them at a speed that could kill them.

This speed surveillance is ongoing in many areas of the village and hopefully will have a positive effect on speeding over the next few months and general education will hopefully slow people down.

## NDP Guides Development.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July West Berkshires Eastern Area Planning Committee gave conditional outline planning permission for the 110 homes to be built on the site identified in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), which was ratified just over a year ago.

What the conditional approval means is that the developer must abide by a whole list of conditions before, and as, they develop the site. These 36 conditions require such things as a phasing plan for the build, how storm water is to be dealt with, the hours of work, tree protection, archaeology, electric car charging points, superfast broadband strategy, ecology and open space management, amongst others.

Many of the conditions are effectively repeats of the policies contained in the NDP and it can be seen that that document has been fundamental in shaping the development. The Parish Council has consistently followed through on the NDP in all its planning comments. Indeed this was taken right through to the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> when statements from the Parish Council persuaded members of the Planning Committee to add/strengthen two of the conditions that had been proposed by officers.



The next steps will be for the developer to show West Berkshire Council how they will meet the conditions. The developer will then submit a detailed planning application for the first phase of the development. This will include details such as the colour of the bricks and the detailed design of houses, etc. It is only when this is agreed that the first houses will start to be built. This will probably be as the developer finishes work on the 17 new houses behind the Horse and Groom.

## Funday Feedback

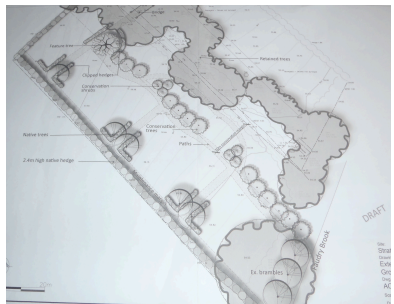
Earlier in the year the Council attended the Mortimer Fun Day and had a stall displaying the topic recently discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting (speeding). These boards sparked interesting debates. Many felt there was a speeding issue in the village and many made comments how 20mph speed limits would be ineffective. Even though the communications started on speeding, the Councillors steered the conversation to the perception the parishoners have of the Parish Council.

Most people are happy with the improved communications, the frequent posts on the SMPC facebook page, the style of this magazine and the drive they have for projects that are being taken forward, such as the Station car park, Footpath to Burghfield and the biodiversity project.

It was pleasing to recieve such positive feedback and will only encourage the Councillors to continue and improve their perception within the village.

## Cemetery Extension

Since the last update we have met with the landscape architects who have produced a draft plan for the additional cemetery area. Further discussions will be carried out when we have safe access to the new area. A bridge construction company have visited to advise on the siting of a bridge across to the plot, and a possible design selected. We don't expect work to start until later next year, once the bridge location has been cleared.



## **Biodiversity and Green Spaces Project**

As part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) a project was set up to enhance the biodiversity of the Parish. A small group has been working to that end since last year.

Amongst other actions, through the Parish Council, they have commissioned a report from consultants that deals with possible actions that might be taken on the Fairground to make it more attractive to a wider range of wildlife, both plants and animals.

The report outlined 12 action areas that may help wildlife. Some of these actions can be carried out over the next few months while some will take longer to implement. Other actions may be good for wildlife but may be impractical to implement due to the nature of the Fairground.

The Parish Council considered the report at its September meeting and has resolved to carry out the following works over the next few months at a cost of about £3,500.

### **Identify and remove invasive cotoneaster**

There is a legal requirement to remove invasive cotoneaster species some of which are growing on the Fairground

### **Obtain a licence to deal with ponds from Natural England**

This is a requirement if undertaking significant work on the ponds e.g. making them deeper; it is also recommended if doing minor work e.g. removing vegetation by hand.

### **Establish scalloped grassland margins**

Margins would range from 3 m to 7 m in width along the edges of existing hedgerows, which form the northern, and parts of the east and west boundaries. These long grass margins would be created by leaving these areas uncut for a period of least 12 months. Then each year one third of the area would be cut in September. This will increase the range of flora and fauna found on the Fairground.

### **Restore heathland in centre of the Fairground**

This would cover about half the enclosed central strip of the Fairground from the middle towards Hammonds Heath. Before doing anything, advice will be sought on how best to undertake it, in one go or a section at a time to minimise disturbance to existing

fauna and insect life. The heathland plants have been neglected in the past and now need a major intervention to bring them back to a much improved state.

Photo showing a small patch of common heather in the central strip



### **Additional hedgerow planting**

This new planting would be from the Budgens corner halfway along the western boundary to the play area. Consideration will be given to selecting species that will discourage inappropriate behaviour close to Badger's Croft. Residents of Badger's Croft will be consulted to agree the height of the new hedging. An additional hedgerow will allow wildlife to more readily move around the Fairground and to and from nearby areas. The hedgerow, once established, will also provide additional nesting opportunities for breeding birds.

### **Pond Restoration**

In order to maintain and enhance the ponds it is necessary to cut back/remove vegetation from around the Fairground pond and to remove a significant part of the bulrush and flag iris in the War memorial pond.

In order to carry out this work Natural England must be consulted, this will possibly need the granting of a licence to work on the ponds due to presence of Great Crested Newts and possibly common toad.

Consideration will also be given to deepening the ponds to maintain a water surface for longer and accommodate an underwater rubble pile as habitat for aquatic invertebrates and amphibians. A 'DNA' test will also be carried out in the spring of 2019 to determine if Great Crested Newts still inhabit the ponds. This work will help create a more aesthetically pleasing ponds, with a greater diversity of plants and wildlife, including dragonflies and damselflies.



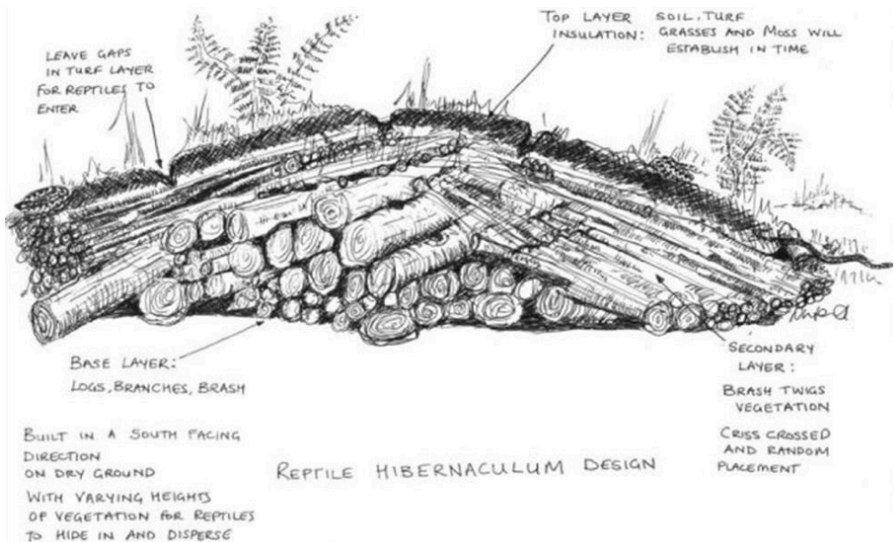
Photo showing the Bull rushes and flag iris in the War Memorial pond



An example of a biodiverse wildlife pond

### Herpetofauna hibernacula (Bug hotels)

This is a cheap project just needing old logs to create suitable fauna and insect accommodation. These log piles will provide shelter and hibernation opportunities for reptiles and amphibians, as well as habitat for nationally declining invertebrates such as the stag beetle. An example of the design of such a construction is shown below.



### Bird & bat boxes

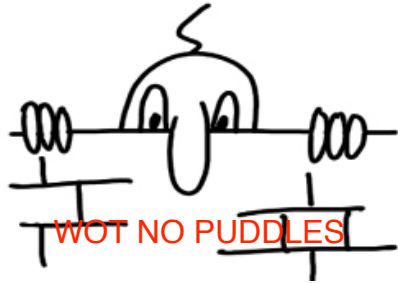
These could put in place this autumn enabling the boxes to naturalise before next year's breeding season. A variety of boxes would be purchased to encourage different species of birds.



## Pedestrian Crossing update

How many times last autumn did you have to cross the road by St. John's school pedestrian crossing and end up with wet or muddy feet ?

Following the successful installation of the pedestrian crossing by St. John's School it became apparent that, during the wetter periods of the year, the adjacent works caused severe ponding around the pavement. People were also walking on the grass verge which was making the whole situation a muddy mess. This was serious enough to substantially reduce the benefit of the crossing. The Council listened to your comments and have agreed with West Berkshire Council that the footpath needed some remedial work. This has now been completed and we hope this is the final solution. Any further issues please contact the Parish Clerk.



## Village notice boards

The Council have been looking for replacements for the six blue Village notice boards for some considerable time, without success, all of them having locking doors on them. However, we heard recently from one of our contacts of a new pinnable surface for exterior boards, that should satisfy the needs of our poster placers. We are finalising the design and expect to place the order soon.



## Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day, 11th November, this year falls on a Sunday and marks 100 years since the end of the First World War.

The Remembrance Day Service, including the processions and the laying of wreaths, will take place as usual on Sunday morning at the War Memorial starting about 10:50 am. This service is always well attended and the centenary gives another reason to attend. The usual road closures will be in place from 10:45 to about 11:15.



In addition, a nationwide series of events is taking place on Sunday evening under the title 'Battle's Over – A Nations Tribute' and the Parish Council is planning to take part. Two of the events are:

### 18.55: The Last Post

1000 individual Buglers sound this historic tribute at WW1 Beacons of Light locations across the Nation and UK Overseas Territories.

### 19.00: WW1 Beacons of Light

Over 1000 Beacons of Light symbolising an end to the darkness of war and a return to the light of peace.

The intention is to light the Parish Council beacon on the Fairground as part of this event, preceded by a bugler sounding the last post. Before that it is likely that a short event will consist of a reading of 'Tribute to the Millions' – the official national tribute and a reading of the names of those who perished in The First World War and are remembered on our War Memorial. Details are being finalised but expect the event to start at about 6:40 pm on the Fairground.

This seems an appropriate time to remind you that information about the casualties named on our War Memorial is available on the SMPC website:

[http://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/Stratfield-Mortimer-PC/war\\_memorial-3866.aspx](http://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/Stratfield-Mortimer-PC/war_memorial-3866.aspx)

This comprises the results carried out by Major John Kemp MBE who compiled notes on each casualty and obtained details of the grave and cemetery for each one. He gave the results to the Parish Council as a loose-leaf folder in 2004. In 2016 SMPC put this information on line. Each entry comprises Major Kemp's notes and a hyperlink to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for that person including, cemetery and grave location.

## Youth Focus Group



In the last newsletter there was an article about consultation that had taken place with the young people of the village. The result of the consultation suggested, amongst other things, that a Youth Focus Group be established to help steer

development plans so that they include relevant provision for young people.

At its September meeting, the Parish Council agreed to use a charitable organisation, called Berkshire Youth, to organise and run such a focus group based on pupils from Willink. The cost of this will be up to £2,500 for up to 12 sessions.

The purpose of the proposed focus group is basically two fold. Firstly, the mere establishment of the group should allow the parish council to better understand the needs and aspirations of the young people.

Secondly the focus group could work with the Parish Council to prioritise the many, many projects which the previous consultation has identified. This would then be followed by discussions to sort out the best way of taking these exciting projects forward.

Berkshire Youth feel that it is really important that the Parish Council have a familiar face within the school who attends all the sessions. This will help with managing expectations but also make the young people feel recognised and that they are having an impact within their community. Fortunately a very able candidate, Councillor Kilshaw, has volunteered for this role and will now take this project forward.

## FAIRGROUND TENNIS COURTS



With support from our District Councillors and West Berkshire Council, which is part funding the project, we have almost completed some planned sport and leisure facilities improvements.

The mobile floodlights have been received and are stored at the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field – these can also be used for other village events. We have recently completed the installation of a new power supply to the Fairground tennis courts area. And, once some final queries are resolved, we will be able to complete the project with the implementation of an on line booking system with PIN code access. This will make booking and accessing the courts so much simpler for all who want to use them.

A few months ago the Parish Council made an application to The Good Exchange, a kind of fundraising ‘broker’, to see if we could raise more money for this project. We are delighted to have just received confirmation of an additional £3,773 awarded to SMPC for the project.

We are working with Mortimer Tennis Club and other interested parties to develop ideas on how to promote tennis in Mortimer. We would like to form a kind of ‘partnership’, with the aim of offering events and activities that encourage all levels of tennis playing. This can range from a leisurely ‘knockabout’ through to those who want to be competitive and play in a league. Through this, we hope to increase the use of the courts.

As an example, Mortimer Tennis Club have arranged a six week coaching course for young players, which started in early September. There is an option for adult coaching as well. There is still time to join such courses – contact [tony@ctc-tennis.co.uk](mailto:tony@ctc-tennis.co.uk) or [info@mortimertennisclub.co.uk](mailto:info@mortimertennisclub.co.uk) for more information

A very special offer for October half term – FREE TENNIS all week! SMPC are making the use of the courts completely free for the period from Saturday 20 October to Sunday 28 October. You will still need to make a booking in Budgens in the usual way to make sure the courts are available for you to use, and you will be asked for a contact name and number. So when you have finished doing the Scarecrow Trail, why not give tennis a try?

# Fairground update

A lot of work has been completed on the Fairground over the summer.

New fencing has been erected along the south boundary of the conservation area and also along Hammonds Heath, where two new kissing gates and improved bridging over the ditch have been installed.

The MUGA multi-sport panels have been repaired and repainted as new.

Much of the equipment in the infants playground has been repainted in nice bright colours and its whole perimeter fence has also had a freshen-up. The elephant rocker reached the end of its life and will be replaced this autumn.

Two wiggly Spicas, the hip-hop rotating see-saw and the giant nest swing have all been refurbished or replaced.

As referred to earlier in the Biodiversity update, below is an overview of the habitat survey results on the Fairground.



## **Christmas is coming !**

All are very welcome to attend the following Christmas events on the Fairground:



### **Lighting the Christmas Tree – 7.00pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> December**

On Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December, following the 6.00 pm Advent Service at St. John's Church, Mortimer, there will be a procession to the Fairground for the blessing and lighting of the Christmas tree at 7.00 pm.

### **Community Carols – 5.00pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> December**

The Community Carols around the Christmas tree on the Fairground will start at 5 pm on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, with music from the South Berks Concert Band. Song sheets will be provided.

## **Mortimer Station Car Park Update**

The "Need Survey" for the station car park has been completed and a report prepared by Pro Vision.

The consultation attracted 460 responses from interested parties which is considered a very high response rate - so well done those who responded !

Of those, 353 people (82% of respondents) indicated that they would use the station more frequently if it was easier to park at the station. This should persuade the doubting West Berkshire Planners that there is a need for at least 100 new car park spaces.

The results clearly demonstrate popular demand for both the use of the existing station and more parking at the station by the local community.

## **Alan Thorpe Trophy cricket match**

Mortimer Cricket Club won a closely fought match against Mortimer Village Players. They lifted the Alan Thorpe Challenge Trophy after a great performance by David North (5) wickets and Craig North / Farooq's tight opening spell. Ben Cape, only 13 scored 38, including the only 6 of the game. Mortimer Villagers couldn't hold on to the trophy despite 27 runs each from Gary Allwood and Grant Meadows and a hatrick from Rob Ferris. Everyone is looking forward to next year!

## **Other Useful Contacts**

**Fairground Emergency** 0743 6807543 To report any emergencies and dangerous situations on the Fairground.

For **non-emergencies** please contact the Parish Council Office 0118 9331955

**Police Non-Emergency** 101

To report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

**NHS non-Emergency** 111

If you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

**West Berks Council (WBC)** 01635 551111

**WBC** Out of Hours Emergency Contact 01635 42161

To report major incidents out of hours.

West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team 01635 519080

streetcare@westberks.gov.uk

To report problems with streets, roads, highways, pavements, etc.

West Berkshire District Councillors for the Mortimer Ward

Cllr Mollie Lock

Cllr Graham Bridgman

**Mortimer Village Partnership**

[www.mortimervillage.org.uk](http://www.mortimervillage.org.uk)

For village news and information on events, including a directory of local clubs and businesses.

## PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Council Office

The Library

27 Victoria Road

Mortimer

RG7 3SH

Tel: 0118 933 1955

Email Lynn: [the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

Email Bernise: [admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

Website: [www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](http://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

Facebook: [facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil](https://facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil)

Minutes and Agendas of Council meetings, as well as other Council information, can be viewed on the above website or on the Parish Council notice boards which are located outside The Baobab (the old Post Office) and the library.

The Parish Council Office is normally open:

Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays,

09:30 to 17:00

If the office is closed, correspondence can be left with the library staff or put in the library letter box.