

STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL

Newsletter—Summer 2023



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Welcome to this Edition....

A warm welcome to this edition of your parish newsletter – the first since the local elections in May and the constitution of a new Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council.

As always, many thanks to everyone who has contributed to production and distribution – the authors of the articles, Bernise O'Reilly in the Parish Office who so ably puts it all together for the printers, Chris Morsley and the rest of the team who sort the copies into the right distribution bundles, and everyone who helped to distribute this and the MVP magazine together.

I hope you find this edition interesting and useful – if anything here provokes a particular question or comment you'll find my contact details on the parish website.

All the best

Graham Bridgman (Editor and SMPC Vice-Chairman)

Council Overview

Introduction

The Parish Council started its new municipal year at the May meeting when, after many years in the role, Mike Dennett stepped down as Chairman. All the other councillors join me in thanking him warmly for his exceptionally dedicated service, for always being positive, and for keeping things running so smoothly. It is not going to be an easy act to follow.

I would like to encourage parishioners to have more contact with your Parish Council. All the full council and committee meetings are open to the public - you are welcome to just come and listen, or ask us a question in the public session at the start of a meeting. Any councillor can be contacted individually by email or by phone should you have an issue the Parish Council can help with.

Alternatively, you can call into the Parish Council office behind the Library to speak to the Clerk during office opening hours. These, the schedule of meetings (including agendas), and contact details for councillors can all be found on our website:

<https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk>

Danusia Morsley (SMPC Chairman)

The New (or Not So New) Parish Council

Following May's local elections, we welcome back 13 familiar faces onto the Parish Council – Cllrs Graham Bridgman, Dave Butler, Nick Carter, Mike Dennett, Heath Geary, Stephen Hill, Dave Kilshaw, Mollie Lock,

Amanda Marsden, Danusia Morsley, Andy Noonan, Michael Shaw and John Wells.

All but two of the 15 existing councillors stood for re-election, and because there were no other candidates they were all elected unopposed.

The two councillors who did not stand for re-election were Keeleigh Field and Chris Lewis.

Having relocated from Mortimer, Keeleigh was not eligible to stand which is a great shame since she had contributed a great deal to the Council and had single-handedly brought the average age down somewhat!

Chris had decided to hang up his parish councillor hat (well, almost), having been first elected to the Council in 1987 and serving a total of 24 years on SMPC. We say “almost” because we are pleased to report that Chris has recently been co-opted onto the Roads, Footpaths and Commons Committee and the Garth Hall Working Party.

Both Chris and Keeleigh made invaluable contributions during their time as councillors and SMPC thanks them for their support and input, and wishes them all the best for the future.

As Danusia says above, at the Council’s Annual Meeting in May, Mike Dennett decided not to stand for re-election as Chairman, having first held the position from 2014-17 and then picked up the gavel again in 2019. Mike’s dedication to the role has kept him busy, often going above and beyond what is required.

Moving forward, this new municipal year sees Cllr Danusia Morsley as Chairman and Cllr Graham Bridgman as Vice-Chairman. Contact details for all members and the roles they have undertaken may be found on the SMPC website at www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk.

We were delighted to be able to fill one of the two councillor vacancies at our June meeting, when Andrew Richardson was co-opted, having

previously served as a councillor from 2014-19. Coming from a financial background, Andrew has much to offer in sound financial practice and governance.

The Parish Council and its committees meet regularly throughout the year. Details of meetings may be found in this newsletter, on the SMPC noticeboards located outside the Library and The Baobab, and on the website. All meetings listed are open to the public and we look forward to seeing you there.

It Could Be You!

There remains one vacancy on the Council which we are keen to fill. Would you consider becoming a councillor? Apart from being passionate about your local community no other experience or specialist qualifications are needed.

Further information may be found at www.local.gov.uk or, even better, why not speak to one of the current serving members about what's involved? Alternatively, you can express your interest by contacting the Council office on 0118 9331955 or by emailing the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk.

Lynn Hannawin (SMPC Clerk)



Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

This is the report presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on 24 April by Mike Dennett, Chairman of the Parish Council:

"This report covers the period May 2022 to April 2023 which has been a very active year for the Council. At this time last year we were preparing for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The events were coordinated by a working party set up by SMPC but that grew with many other members. I believe all involved produced a weekend that will live long in the village memory. I can't possibly thank everyone, so many volunteers stepped forward. Many thanks indeed to Mortimer Music Live and Mortimer Village Partnership for their major roles in the weekend, to Cllr Simon Beard who led the working party and to Eric Howell and Andy Bell for the procession.

You have heard earlier of some of the projects the council has been undertaking. In particular, the Mortimer to Burghfield Footway/Cycleway where we have commissioned the necessary surveys and are about to submit a planning application. Some progress has been made with improving the footway down the Street to St Mary's School and this is continuing. Adult fitness equipment has been installed on the Fairground. The council has also been able to contribute to the discussions on the future of Windmill Court. The council introduced a Community Grant Scheme and has made relatively small grants to ten community organisations. We have also managed to hold the precept virtually constant. You may have noticed that on your Council Tax bill that the contribution to SMPC actually decreased by 0.2%!

We have come to the end of the four year term of the council and election of councillors for the new council should have taken place in May. The council comprises 15 councillors but only 13 nominations were received by West Berkshire Council. These 13 were therefore elected in an uncontested election and the two vacancies must be filled by co-option in the new council year.

The 13 councillors are all currently in office, but the other two current councillors did not stand. Cllr Chris Lewis was a councillor in the late 1990s until 2007, he then had a break and re-joined the council in 2015. Cllr Keeleigh Field joined the council in 2019 and was our youngest ever councillor. Unfortunately, having moved out of the parish Keeleigh was not eligible for re-election. I thank them both for their service and dedication to the council.

There is perhaps a misconception that the council consists of the same councillors year after year. Of the 15 councillors elected in 2019, ten remain as councillors at present with the other five being replaced by co-options. Indeed, we have co-opted three councillors in the last year and I am delighted to say these all stood for re-election. Please consider whether you would like to be co-opted and contribute to the council and the running of the parish. We need you!

Finally, I thank all councillors for their varied contributions during the year. The council is incredibly lucky to have three outstanding staff, Lynn (The Clerk), Bernise (Assistant to the Clerk) and Frank (Custodian). They ensure the smooth and efficient running of the council and on behalf of all, I thank them for their outstanding performances during the year."

Thoughts from the Outgoing Chairman

It has been my pleasure to be the Chairman of SMPC for the last four years (and for three years between 2014 and 2017), but enough is enough, both for the Parish and myself!

I am delighted that Cllr Danusia Morsley, who had been Vice Chairman for the last three years, is now Chairman. I am certain that Danusia will be very effective, ably assisted by our new Vice-Chairman, Cllr Graham Bridgman.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of councillors and staff I believe the council is in good shape and fully contributing to the community.

When I think back, two things stand out. The first is the adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan in 2017. This has shaped, and controlled, the development of Mortimer over the last few years, and continues to do so – it has meant that no additional housing is proposed in the imminent West Berkshire Local Plan (to 2039). It also brought substantial financial input to the Parish through an enhanced share of the Community Infrastructure Levy paid by developers, being used by SMPC to fund various projects.

The second highlight is the Platinum Jubilee Celebration, which brought together village organisations and the community in a never to be forgotten weekend.

It has been rather interesting helping to guide fifteen councillors, often with differing opinions, to reach sensible decisions that are legal and within the rules. Whilst the council has a maximum of fifteen councillors at any time, membership fluctuates and I think that 36 different councillors have had to put up with my chairing over the years. I can't forget any of them!

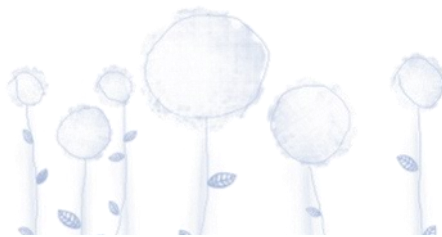
I think I must hold the records for chairing the longest and shortest meetings of the full council. Meetings start at 7:30 pm and back in 2015 one continued to 11:40 pm - we had to reach some important decisions that night (but time limits were then introduced!).

The shortest meeting occurred in March 2020 immediately prior to the first Covid lockdown. We had to meet in person to pass emergency powers to enable us to function during lockdown. It was held by torchlight on the grass behind the library with the minimum quorate number of councillors standing socially distanced, and lasted two minutes!

I thank all the councillors who have helped and supported me as Charman over the years. Very special thanks to Lynn Hannawin, who is our superb Clerk – Lynn does all the hard work, and has made my role much, much, easier. The council is extremely fortunate to have her as Clerk, and more than fortunate that she is so admirably supported by Bernise O'Reilly as Assistant Clerk and Frank Stansfield as Custodian.

Finally, I thank my wife Margaret for her continued support and patience during these years. She has very kindly supported me though the many evenings out at committee meetings and the long periods when I have been in my study reading and writing, as well as coping with the occasional, sudden and unexpected absences when emergencies occur.

Mike Dennett





Mortimer Celebrates the King's Coronation

Following the success of the Jubilee Celebration last year, Mortimer Village Partnership and Mortimer Music Live CIC got together, with the generous support of the Parish Council and a number of other Sponsors, to put on another fantastic free event on the Fairground to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III on 6 May. Mortimer now has a deserved reputation for putting on high quality events for the community and this was no exception.

As anyone who joined us will appreciate, an event like this doesn't just get thrown together. It took a lot of organising, and a team of 20 or so - ably led by Doug Overett for MVP and Ryan Saunders for MML - met regularly over four months pulling everything together.

Even though the weather was far from ideal in the morning, quite a few hardy individuals came and watched the ceremony with us (umbrellas and gazebos in evidence) on the six metre TV screen we'd set up.

As the weather improved (well, slightly!), so the crowds arrived – at its peak the estimate was that 4,000 people attended. With the Big Screen and music in the afternoon, Market Row, Classic Cars, Fairground rides and a well-stocked bar, everyone had a great time despite the grey skies.

Starting with local bands and music groups in the afternoon, and moving into our headline acts in the evening, the music gave a great backdrop to the activities and backed up a fun packed day – we had The

Hurst Singers, the Ta-Das Choir, the South Berks Concert Band and the West Berkshire Rock Choir during the afternoon, followed by Blindspot, Rigsby and then the MML House Band, featuring SIX The Musical by Willink School. We wrapped up with The Britpop Boys followed by a spectacular fireworks display.

Nothing like this runs without a lot of volunteers and we had over 100 people running everything from the bar to car parking, erecting marquees and marshalling, then dismantling everything late into the night and the next day. Huge thanks go to all of them and, once again, to our sponsors.

Dave Kilshaw and Graham Bridgman



Mortimer's Neighbourhood Plans

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (*see the article on Working Parties*) has two main functions – to review the existing Neighbourhood Development Plan (which commenced in 2017 and is valid until 2026), and to develop a new Neighbourhood Plan for Mortimer to run from the expiry of the current one through to 2039.

These Plans are our community's shared vision for the future of Mortimer. They allow us to shape development and growth, choose where we want new homes, shops and workplaces to be built, have our say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. They let us plan for the types of development we need to meet our community's needs and connect to the future local planning priorities across West Berkshire – the current Neighbourhood Development Plan is already being used to shape the Tower House Farm development.

In the current Plan we reserved land in the village for a new infant school and doctors' surgery. We are now proposing that the land be reassigned for school sports and play facilities, and a dental practice with parking, with the remainder continuing to be set aside for a possible future doctor's surgery. We are awaiting feedback from West Berkshire Council on these proposals, and anticipate that they will appoint an examiner to undertake a review, before a revised Neighbourhood Development Plan can be issued.

Separately, we are progressing with our new Neighbourhood Plan. We are awaiting the full report from the public consultations which took place earlier this year, and then we will start to develop the policies of our new Plan. We are planning a series of workshops to add detail to the main themes of the new Plan, including a strategy for Mortimer's sustainable development. We expect that our new Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan will be completed by 2025 (and, as above, it will be valid until 2039).

For the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan (2017) visit:

<https://np.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk>.

For the latest news, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/mortimerneighbourhoodplan>.

Jo Emberson-Wines (Chair of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group)

Annual Parish Meeting 2023

The Annual Parish meeting was held at St John's Hall on 24 April (the draft minutes are available on the Minutes tab of the SMPC website).

The meeting started with Stratfield Mortimer Community Awards for 2023 being presented to Rebecca Barker and Anne Haines who have both contributed substantially to the community (see separate article).

The guest speaker of the evening was Jenny Graham, (the Environment Delivery Manager for West Berkshire Council) whose subject was *"You don't have to be an expert! How we can all play our part in tackling climate change"*. Jenny reported on initiatives that may be relevant to Mortimer such as Solar Together; Car Club; electric vehicle (EV) charging points and aDoddle.

In answer to questions, Jenny confirmed that:

- WBC are just completing the Transport Plan which feeds into the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), but any changes - including a return of Mortimer's Sunday bus service - will be dependent on Government funding. Members of the public should participate in future relevant consultations to highlight the need for a Sunday bus service.
- A contract for providing on street EV charging points is in place and WBC are currently going out to tender for a contract for the provision of charging points in other places (eg car parks). It is likely that charging points in other locations will be supplied first to those areas, such as Mortimer, that are already in discussion with WBC.

Short presentations were given on the Mortimer Greening Campaign (Cllr Amanda Marsden) and Sewage Discharges into Foudry Brook (Cllr Mike Dennett) - please see articles elsewhere in this newsletter for details.

Jo Emberson-Wines (Chair of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group) gave an update on progress with the Neighbourhood Plan.

There was also a short update on speeding within the village including a call for volunteers to operate the speed detection equipment.

The meeting ended with the presentation of the Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (see separate article).

Mike Dennett

Parish Council Working Parties

Background

The Parish Council has four standing committees that carry on from year to year: Fairground and Cemetery; Finance and General Purposes; Planning; and Roads, Footpaths and Commons. Each may have delegated powers from the full council to take decisions (eg the Planning Committee sends observations on behalf of SMPC regarding new planning applications to West Berkshire Council).

Sometimes, however, it is useful to create smaller groups that focus on a particular project or problem, and which will disappear when they are no longer needed. These are council working parties (or sometimes ‘working groups’) - they cannot make decisions or directly initiate spending of money, but they can bring proposals and conclusions to the full Council. People who are not councillors, but who can provide specialist expertise or continuity, may be invited to join a working party.

In addition to the SMPC Committees and Working Parties (and the various outside bodies, charities, etc, that SMPC appoints members to), it is worth mentioning the *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group* – not an SMPC Working Party as such, but a very important group that SMPC appoints – see its report elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Working Parties

We thought readers would be interested to know the focus of the current SMPC Working Parties

Climate and Environment liaises with the *Greening Mortimer* campaign to help reduce our impact, as individuals and as a village, on climate and biodiversity. At present there are three pillars to the work: home energy saving; space for nature; and improved health and well-being for individuals. As an example, the campaign has bought a thermal camera and trained some volunteers in interpreting the results. This will be used next winter – when contrasts between indoor and outdoor temperatures

are larger - to identify where insulation or draught-proofing of houses will be most effective.

Mortimer-Burghfield Cycleway is focused on the major project (over and above the housing site) that arose out of the Neighbourhood Development Plan: to provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists between the two villages. This is more complex than it sounds – the ecological impact, technical issues, routes and negotiations with multiple landowners all have to be dealt with - but - after several years' work we are on the cusp of a planning application.

Returning *Garth Hall* to village use is covered in its own article in this newsletter. It is a complex enough problem to justify its own working party.

The expansion of the *Railway Station Car Park* is a priority for the village, desirable for GWR, but not a strategic priority for the Department for Transport. It is also a disconcertingly expensive project - the working party is still investigating ways in which it might be brought to pass, but the financial signs are not hopeful at present.

The Street Footway from the village to St Mary's school is – bluntly – too narrow in many places. Persistent and continuing lobbying of the West Berkshire Highways Department by the working party has led to improvements to the pavement east from the pedestrian crossing down to Pitfield Lane, and the cutting back of the hedges towards the mini-roundabout at The Berries. Discussions continue about further improvements to make better use of the available footway space.

And, finally, the *Communications* working party aims to improve the flow of information to and fro between SMPC and our residents - you are reading one of the consequences!

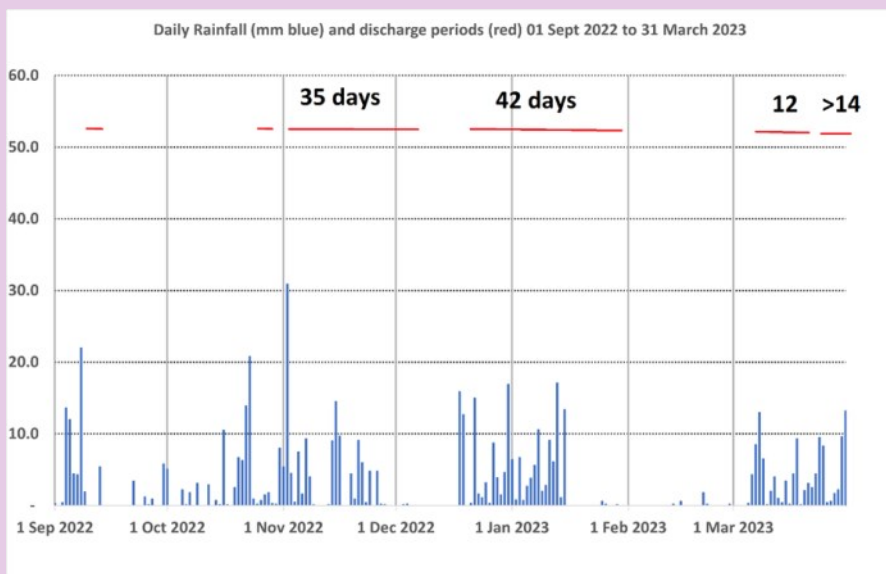
Michael Shaw

Storm Discharges into Foudry Brook

Analysis

In the April 2022 newsletter we published information on storm discharges by Thames Water into the Foudry Brook. We have now updated the analysis to include last winter, and to link discharges with rainfall data for Stratfield Mortimer (kindly provided by Dr Stephen Burt, FRMetSoc).

The graph below shows daily rainfall (blue, in mm) for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 March 2023. The red lines show periods of discharge into the Brook.



There was a short period of discharge in early September following 50 mm (two inches) of rain in a week. Major spells of discharge occurred throughout November/early December (35 days) and mid-December to the end of January (42 days). February was very dry and without discharges but these started again in early March and actually continued longer into April (see EDM picture later).

The table below summarises the discharges over the last four winter periods.

Period 1 Sept to 31 March	Rainfall (mm)	Days of discharge	Long spells of discharge (days)
2019/20	608	139	67, 59, 8, 5
2020/21	487	123	52, 40, 26, 5
2021/22	341	29	9, 8, 6
2022/23	588	105	42, 35, 14, 12

Bearing in mind that the period 1 September to 31 March is 212 days, discharges occurred for two-thirds of that period in 2019/20 and half or above in 2021/21 and 2022/23.

In terms of winter rainfall (1 October to 31 March), 2019/20 had 135% of the mean, 2020/21 117%, 2021/22 75%, and 2022/23 129%. None of these years was exceptionally wet (and 2021/22 was relatively dry).

Summer discharges are infrequent but do occur following heavy rainfall. A discharge of 55 hours started on 27 August 2020, following an intense shower of 42.3 mm of rain in three hours.

In 2021 a discharge of almost four days occurred from 18 June followed by another of 10 days from 27 June. Rainfall on 17 and 18 June was 53.2mm, with 21.1 mm on 27 June and 15.4 mm on 5 July.

Statements from Thames Water

In January Thames Water posted on their website:

“An upgrade is planned for Mortimer STW. This will include an increase on treatment capacity, so will reduce the need for untreated discharges. The £1m project is expected to be complete by December 2023. The date may change as the scheme progresses.”

The Clerk contacted Thames Water for an update on the project and received the following reply:

“As you’ll know we provided a statement on the website recently which included a view on when we expect to be carrying out a scheme to improve performance at Mortimer STW. The forecast for us seeing the benefit from that scheme was expected by December of this year. We’ve had indication from the project engineer in the last few days that there is a high likelihood of the end date of this scheme being pushed back into 2024. Unfortunately there are long lead times on several items

required for this project, and although we can't be certain at this stage, the indication is that a summer 2024 completion date is more likely.

"I should point out that it is not unusual for project delivery dates do vary from month to month, as projects develop and resources and efforts are managed regularly across a portfolio of projects right across the Thames Water estate, so we can only provide a view of the likely timelines at any given time."

Council Action

At the Annual Parish Meeting, Jo Emberson-Wines suggested that contact be made with the charity Action for the River Kennet (ARK), which is the rivers trust dedicated to improving the Kennet and Pang catchments. An online meeting was held with the Director of ARK, Jo Emberson-Wines, the Parish Clerk and me, and ARK is happy to be involved in discussions about how the physical state of the Foudry Brook could be improved by community action.

At the most recent Parish Council meeting it was agreed that:

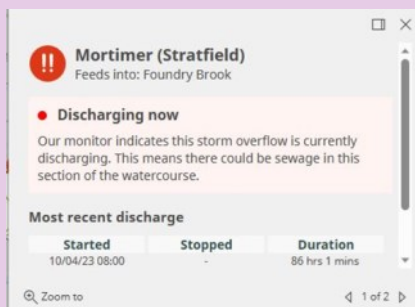
- SMPC will write to Thames Water, including this analysis, requesting a copy of their consent to discharge, information on the maximum rates of discharge of the current equipment, more detail on the proposed upgrade and the estimated effect of the upgrade on discharge frequency.
- That letter with covering letters expressing our concerns be sent to the Environment Agency and Sir John Redwood MP.
- The issue be taken up with West Berkshire Council, which is also looking into sewage discharges in the district.
- Contact is made with another group concerned with discharges by Thames Water in another catchment to share knowledge and experience.

Real Time monitoring of discharges

If you wish to see where Thames Water are discharging into watercourses go to www.thameswater.co.uk/edm-map.

An example is given below (and discharge was continuing when this screenshot was taken).

Mike Dennett



Annual Community Awards

The Stratfield Mortimer Community Awards for 2023 were presented to Rebecca Barker and Anne Haines at the Annual Parish Meeting on 24 April.

Rebecca Barker



Rebecca has served on the Parish Council and was Chairman, has been a school governor at St Johns School, contributed to the Parish Plan Refresh and was a founding member of MVP (including being their first Secretary and the project manager for the first four Fun Days).

She has organised theatre trips to London and a visit to the Houses of Parliament, and has been the brains and the muscle behind making 'Bags 2 School' into a major fund raiser. On top of all of this she is a trustee of The Alfred Palmer Memorial Field.

More recently, she has developed the very successful Mortimer Lunch Club, bringing help and support to many older members of the community – particularly during COVID - as well as providing regular lunch gatherings. Rebecca has been very active at fund raising as well as administrating its activities and arranging transport for participants.

Anne Haines

Anne was a district nurse in Mortimer and, when raising her family, set up a children's pre-owned clothes market in her kitchen.

Anne has been a stalwart of Mortimer Women's Institute for many years and is the lead in providing toiletry bags for those admitted unexpectedly to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. She collects and delivers prescriptions for those unable to collect themselves and looks



after near neighbours who need support.

She has been a member of Mortimer Flower Circle for more than 45 years, being its saviour as well as being chairman for more than 20 years. Anne also helps the Mortimer Toddler and Baby Club, and during COVID was a volunteer at the Pangbourne vaccination centre. More recently, Anne has become an escort on Handibus, helping especially with getting people to and from the Lunch Club.

Community Award Plates

For the last twenty or so years, the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award has been a handmade commemorative plate. When an award is to be made, the recipient is asked what images they would like on the plate. The images, or words describing what is desired, are sent to Andrew Hazelden at his pottery in Bradfield, and he then designs, makes and paints the plate.

This year, Rebecca asked for logos for Mortimer Village Partnership Bags 2 School and the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field, and an espresso coffee cup. Anne asked for St John's Church, flowers and greenery.



Greening Mortimer - Phase 2 on its way!

Although now under the umbrella of Mortimer Village Partnership, the Parish Council continues to support and take a proactive interest in Greening Mortimer as an important community initiative.

The successful launch at the beginning of this year will result in estimated savings of 322 tonnes of CO2 (that would fill 322 hot air balloons) and a total of £186,000 for those households taking part.

Preparation for Phase 2 is now in progress. A full update is given in the MVP Newsletter, but in summary Phase 2 takes our community effort to another level and focuses on:

- making space and improving habitats for our nature;
- working together to reduce our energy consumption, energy bills and carbon footprint;
- our health and wellbeing in these changing times.

Over the coming months we will be reaching out to the many community groups that we are lucky to have in Mortimer, but you don't have to wait! - for more information and to join the conversation, follow us:

www.facebook.com/GreeningMortimer

and/or email us: greening@mortimervillage.org.uk.

Amanda Marsden



Fruit Trees on The Fairground

Last winter, responding to an enquiry from *Incredible Edible Mortimer*, the Parish Council agreed to pay for a small, semi-natural, orchard at the western (playground) end of The Fairground. A group of volunteers planted 13 trees of on 18 February - 11 apples and two damsons. If the dry weather continues, volunteers from Incredible Edible have agreed to water the young trees.

More about the damsons later, but let's start with the apple trees.

The above ground part of a cultivated apple is multiplied by grafting it to a root system (rootstock) which determines how big the tree will grow and how vigorously. The soil in The Fairground is poor and shallow, so we chose a vigorous rootstock and inoculated it with a fungus (mycorrhiza) which should help the tree to scavenge water and nutrients from the soil. This will eventually lead to a fairly big tree, but it is easy to harvest upper branches with a bag attached to the end of a pole. This year, it will be best to allow at most a single fruit to develop, so that the tree puts its effort into developing above- and below-ground structure.

To get fruit at all, most varieties need to be pollinated by insects. A mixed orchard like ours needs to be planted so that each variety has a partner or two flowering at the same time. The exceptions here are the well-known Bramley cooking apple and, of course, the damsons. We have included a crab apple as a 'universal pollinator'.

The apple-bearing parts of a tree are prone to attack by pests and diseases. We won't be spraying pesticides (natural or not) so a primary consideration was to try and choose varieties which were reputed to be disease resistant. The four biggest issues in Mortimer are codling moth, scab, canker, and brown rot: codling moth caterpillars burrow into the developing apples, encourage rot in storage and can be an unpleasant surprise in one's mouth; scab is caused by a fungus that damages the surface of apples, lets in rots, and causes fruit to drop before they are ripe; canker kills infected shoots and branches and finally the whole woody structure of the tree; and brown rot destroys infected fruit, but mostly needs another pest or disease to let it in.

Ideally, we would have picked varieties explicitly resistant to all four problems, but even specialist nurseries can't do the long-term large-scale experiments to assess them on the hundreds of varieties available. Furthermore, almost all commercial growing takes special measures to minimise the pressure from these problems. All the varieties chosen hint at 'disease resistance', but it is hard to be sure quite what this means. So we have not chosen rare or local varieties or varieties which are known to be very susceptible to particular problems. (For example, the delicious, attractive and well-scented 'Cornish Gilliflower' has a very awkward form, is tricky to prune, and is very susceptible to codling moth and therefore brown rot. 'Cox' is very susceptible to scab.)

The original concept included pears and not damsons. Most pears go from inedible rocks to squashy messes in a very few weeks and therefore don't seem sensible for a public planting like this; they need individual care. On the other hand, 'Shropshire Prune' damsons yield well, resist attack by plum moth and brown rot, survive canker and are easy to preserve.

I'm sure gardeners more expert than me will find lots to criticise ... but we have made a start and got the trees in the ground. For completeness' sake, here are the varieties planted, in rough order of flowering: Egremont Russet, Lord Lamborne, Adams Pearmain, Discovery, Elstar, Golden Delicious, Ellinson's Orange, Ashmead's Kernel, Bramley, Edward VII. The crab apple was Butterball.

Michael Shaw



Windmill Court Update

Several parish councillors have carried on talking with Sovereign Housing since the petition last autumn. It is very pleasing to be able to say that Sovereign has responded positively and amended their plans significantly (and then amended them again following further conversations).

The new plans, below:

- provide 24 new affordable homes - 13 for social rent and 11 for shared ownership (the original proposals were for a mixture of market and affordable properties);
- retain Stafford House (previously threatened with demolition);
- propose six new one-bedroomed maisonettes suitable for older residents; and
- promise a lettings policy for those maisonettes that gives priority to returning residents, then locals (see below*).



At the time of writing, the plans had not been submitted to West Berkshire Council for planning approval, and letting details will need to be agreed with the West Berkshire Council Housing Enabling Team.

Sovereign Housing have, however, stated they will be proposing a local lettings plan for the one-bed maisonettes to West Berkshire Council as follows:

- “ • *First Priority / First cascade - Returning Windmill Residents.*
- *Second cascade (should all the homes not be occupied by returning Windmill Residents)– Older Persons from Mortimer / connection to Mortimer.*
- *Third and Final cascade – General Needs Housing to anyone on the housing register in West Berkshire.”*

Sovereign go on to say: *“With regards to the other rented properties on site only, we are willing to enter into a Local Lettings agreement to give first priority to local people with a connection to Mortimer, with the second and final cascade – General Needs Housing - to anyone on the register in West Berkshire.”*

We would image that there would be sufficient demand to let all of the homes during the first and second cascade. These plans mean that two of the covenants which it was thought would need to be removed (Stafford House and the provision of all affordable housing) can remain as the new plans do not contravene them. The remaining covenant related to extra care sheltered housing, but the needs survey undertaken by Sovereign last year did not demonstrate any local demand for that type of housing (so Sovereign will still be asking West Berkshire Council for that covenant to be removed).

The most recent information available about Windmill Court residents is that eight remain in situ. Four of these have been found new properties and will move after renovations etc. Suitable properties are still being sought for the other four. Plenty of time is being given to finding them the right homes with no deadlines of when they have to leave.

Danusia Morsley

Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath

The Parish Council is delighted to announce that, after many years in the planning and the endorsement of those who voted in favour of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, a planning application has been submitted for the much longed-for safe pedestrian and cycle route between Mortimer and Burghfield (horse riders will also be permitted to use the route).

A huge amount of work has gone into getting to this point, and all the landowners (Sovereign Housing, Englefield Estate and the Neil William Gardiner Will Trust (the owners of Wokefield Common)) are on board with the proposals – the Parish Council wants to thank them all for responding so positively. We have also obtained pre-application advice from West Berkshire Council and taken that on board in formulating the application.

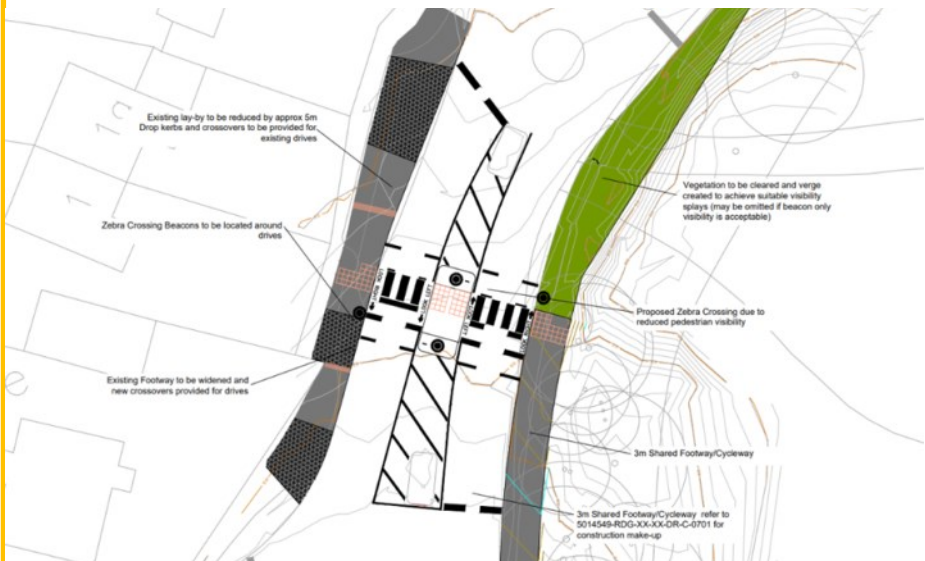


As can be seen from the plan, the route starts at the corner of College Piece and Victoria Road, curves around the corner (within Sovereign Housing land), and then joins the existing permissive path through Englefield Estate land, before crossing Longmoor Lane.

The next section will be close alongside the road and, as it passes the front of Five Oaken Cottage, will be partially formed from the existing tarmac footway (with a kerb upstand separating it from the highway). North of the cottage the path crosses Lockram Brook, where a small bridge will be

constructed, and then continues (approximately following the informal path that already exists).

The path will emerge from the wood edge about 50 metres south of the twin roundabouts where Reading Road, Padworth Road and Goring Lane meet, and follow the verge edge to a new zebra crossing point between the two roundabouts, with the area between the roundabouts having barriers to form an island so that pedestrians and cyclists can wait safely between crossing the two carriageways.



Extensive tree and ecological surveys have been undertaken and the route designed so that very few trees will be affected. The construction of the path through the trees is of a no-dig permeable type, which will minimise any impact on the tree roots.

As soon as the planning reference for the application has been issued, the Parish Council will publicise this so everyone interested can access the West Berkshire Planning Portal and see all the details.

Danusia Morsley

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Meeting Dates 2023-2024

Meetings are held in the Methodist Hall unless stated otherwise.

JUNE

Tue	06	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.30pm
Thu	08	Planning Committee	6.45pm
Thu	08	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	22	Planning Committee	7.30pm
Thu	29	Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee	7:30pm

JULY

Tue	04	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.30pm
Thu	13	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	13	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	20	Fairground & Cemetery Committee	7.30pm
Thu	27	Planning Committee	7.30pm

AUGUST

Thu	10	Planning Committee (<i>if required</i>)	7.30pm
Thu	24	Planning Committee (<i>if required</i>)	7.30pm

SEPTEMBER

Tue	05	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.30pm
Thu	14	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	14	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	21	Fairground & Cemetery Committee	7:30pm
Thu	28	Planning Committee	7.30pm

OCTOBER

Thu	12	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	12	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	19	Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee	7.30pm
Thu	26	Planning Committee	7.30pm

NOVEMBER

Thu	02	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.30pm
Thu	09	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	09	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	23	Planning Committee	7.30pm

DECEMBER

Thu	07	Planning Committee (<i>if required</i>)	7.30pm
Thu	21	Planning Committee (<i>if required</i>)	7.30pm

JANUARY 2024

Tue	02	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.30pm
Thu	11	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	11	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	18	Fairground & Cemetery Committee	7.30pm
Thu	25	Planning Committee	7.30pm

FEBRUARY

Thu	01	Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee	7.30pm
Thu	08	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	08	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	22	Planning Committee	7.30pm

MARCH

Thu	07	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7:30pm
Thu	14	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	14	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	28	Planning Committee	7:30pm

APRIL

Thu	11	Planning Committee	6:45pm
Thu	11	FULL COUNCIL	7.30pm
Thu	25	Planning Committee	7.30pm
Mon	29	Annual Parish Meeting <i>St John's Hall</i>	7.30pm

MAY

Thu	02	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.30pm
Thu	09	FULL COUNCIL (Annual Meeting)	7.30pm

Please check website for meeting details:

<https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/calendar>



CONTACT US

Parish Council Office, The Library, 27 Victoria Road, Mortimer RG7 3SH

Opening/working hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday
09:30 to 17:00

Tel: 0118 933 1955

Website (announcements, meetings, people, committees and policies):

<https://stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil>

Neighbourhood Plan: <https://np.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/>

Fairground Emergency contact - for emergencies and dangerous situations: 07436 807543

Non-emergencies contact the Parish Council Office: 0118 9331955

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

West Berks Council: 01635 551111.

Out of hours emergencies only: 01635 42161

Report a problem online: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/reportaproblem>

West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team (to report problems with streets, roads, highways or pavements): Telephone 01635 519080

Email: streetcare@westberks.gov.uk

District Councillors for Burghfield & Mortimer Ward:

Cllr Nick Carter - Nick.Carter2@westberks.gov.uk

Cllr Geoff Mayes - Geoffrey.Mayes1@westberks.gov.uk

Cllr Vicky Poole - Vicky.Poole1@westberks.gov.uk



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