

Mortimer to Burghfield Safe Sustainable Travel Route

Why

- Project has dominated public consultations as to what the public wants for 40+ years.
- Has now become more than simply a wish because of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan:
 - first, it is a project in the NDP endorsed by the community;
 - second, the development identified in the NDP will produce £300k+ of Community Infrastructure Levy for the parish, 50% of which is earmarked for this project (also with the agreement of the community).
- Also needed because West Berkshire Council (WBC) withdrew the school bus from Mortimer to The Willink School in Burghfield in 2016 - the “available route” is not perceived as safe, so it is hardly used – most students are driven or privately bussed to the school.

Who

The new path should be used by:

- residents wishing to use facilities in the other village (leisure centre in Burghfield, doctors and dentist in Mortimer, etc) – we have used a number of 2,500 based on 25% of the village populations;
- students walking or cycling (roughly 300 Mortimer children attend The Willink);
- recreational walkers generally (Mortimer Wellbeing Walks has 70+ regular weekly walkers and over 200 walkers on its contacts list);
- cyclists wishing to avoid using the Reading Road;
- horse riders (part of the route already forms part of the Englefield Estate riding route)
- various other groups (see GEx application).

What

- Route is comprised of upgraded/enhanced existing footways and existing permissive paths, plus a new section of path, a bridge over a brook, and a new pedestrian road crossing;
- Extensive tree and ecological surveys have been undertaken - very few trees will be affected;
- Construction will be of a no-dig permeable type, minimising any impact on tree roots;
- Some changes will be needed to highways, with a crossing with a central refuge suitable for bicycles to be constructed at the northern end.

How - project

SMPC (in particular working group of six councillors) has so far:

- had the route professionally designed;
- obtained pre-planning application advice from WBC;
- obtained positive support from the affected landowners (Sovereign Housing, the Englefield Estate and the Neil William Gardiner Will Trust as owners of Wokefield Common), who will be leasing the land necessary to SMPC;
- lodged a planning application with WBC (ref 23/01524/FUL, a decision in respect of which is awaited),
- obtained prospective costings.

How – finance

- SMPC (see above) has earmarked £150k CIL
- A further £36k of available capital has been added.
- Approximately £46k has been/will be spent on design, planning, etc.
- Roughly £140k available toward construction.
- WBC have indicated that £90k should be available (subject to inclusion in the capital programme and Council sign-off).

What it will cost

Total cost (excluding £46k fees already paid) is assessed at £955,665. This figure is very recent and to be interrogated – whilst it may come down, this is likely to be only by 10% or so.