

Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group Report for Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

August 2023

Governance

A Steering Group and governance regime is in place to oversee progress of the Neighbourhood Plan, reporting to Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council.

The steering group last met on the 15th of August 2023 to discuss progress. All steering group meetings and minutes are open to the public and advertised on the SMPC and NP websites.

Engagement continues with the neighbourhood planning team at West Berkshire Council to keep updated on relevant policy and process and to share best practice. It is noted that officers at WBC have recently changed. Relationships are being established with new officers and via existing links.

Cllr Nick Carter provides connection to WBC. An administrative assistant is employed to support the Steering Group.

A West Berkshire NP best practice sharing forum is in place, and the Stratfield Mortimer NP steering group actively participates.

Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2026 revision (Reserved Land MOR006)

Allocation of 1ha of land for additional social amenity (educational and medical) within the 2017-2026 plan continues to be reviewed with the intention of extending the timeframe for delivery of the policy.

A local public consultation led by the NP steering group closed on the 31 January 2023, with support for an option that allows changes in the geographic placing of the educational and medical amenity.

Progression to extending the reservation of land is taking a twin-tracked approach, as per the decision by SMPC in Feb 2023.

Discussions have been held with TA Fishers for a developer-led planning application that includes reservation of the land and additional housing of a type required by the community.

This route relies on the developer to act, and due to recent complexities with the wider housing development planning application, uncertainty in this solution has increased.

However, terms have been agreed with TA Fishers in regards to Redwoods, and the Dentist drawings and plans are complete with 30 parking spaces; the Residential is open market housing with Bungalows with upstairs bedrooms and charging points for electric cars, giving the opportunity for people to downsize, which meets the requirements for smaller homes. Phase 3 has been approved and is in pretty good shape to proceed.

The school is receiving a piece of land with a house in it, instead of just the land and they are talking about demolition, which was not considered on their funding.

Separately, the NP steering group is progressing a policy revision for the reserved land with WBC, which, as a formal process brings greater chance of a successful outcome for the community. The Steering group are now seeking legal advice to help develop the revised policy wording. Once finalised and submitted to WBC, the process will require Regulations 14 and 16 with public consultations run by WBC.

Neighbourhood Plan 2027-2039

The Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan will be updated to align with the next West Berkshire Council Local Plan. Early community engagement has established that the community are supportive of an update.

The analysis of the Public Consultations, supported by consultants Bluestone is now complete. It is noted that the analysis report from Bluestone arrived later than planned, however this has now been reviewed and accepted by the Steering Group.

Lessons learned regarding scoping and contracting have been discussed and recorded by the Steering Group.

This summer, the Steering Group will be reviewing the existing 2017-2026 NP policies against the analysis of the public consultation, to review what policies to carry over into the 2027-2039 NP and identify new policies that will need more detailed development.

There will be discussions into how to include further possible developments with affordable housing if the settlement boundary where to expand; hence the need to produce high level scope Design Codes for the Parish Council.

The SG is getting in touch with Locality to find a list of Companies for such Design Codes.

Budget 2023/24

2023/24 earmarked budget for the NP steering group	£25,000
Expenditure to 31 July 2023	£1,451.78
Remaining EMR balance for 2022/23	£23,548.22

Expected activities requiring budget in 2023/24:

- Bluestone consultancy costs for 2026-2039 NP document writing
- Administrative assistant costs
- Locality application
- Design Codes Scope