

Cllr Nick – report to parish councils, March 2024



Tower Gardens and land reserved for school/doctors'

TA Fisher has received its 'pre-app' advice for the proposed usage of land set aside in 2017 for a new school/doctors/parking. They will now submit a full application which will reflect the plan put to the public in late 2022. That plan proposes to use some of the area of school sport and play, other for a relocated Oaktree Dental Practice, with the remainder remaining allocated for a possible future doctors' surgery – for which there is no current indication of if/when this will be built. The application may or may not need to be brought before the Eastern Area Planning committee – I'll look into it when it comes forward.

Pending the outcome of the appeal for homes on phase 4 (formerly 2c), TA Fisher presses on with Phase 3 high contains most of the [affordable homes](#).

Biodiversity Net Gain



Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Under the [Environment Act 2021](#), all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) except for small sites must deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain from 12 February 2024. Small sites will need to comply from 2 April 2024. BNG is measured using Defra's biodiversity metric. There's more about BNG [here](#)

Garth Club, Mortimer



Garth Club, St John's Road, Mortimer

The agreed meeting with the two possible new trustees, expected to take place in March, with Cllr. Bridgman and I present, is overdue. I have heard nothing more about arrangements since we met them in Feb. I'm disappointed that RBL is not sticking to agreements, given it continues to incur cost on this in the meantime. The Hobby/Repair Café met with interested residents last night (3 March) to gather further input on resident needs/wishes.

School Parking/Traffic - Mortimer St Mary's

Following an enquiry/concerns from residents I have asked the governors for their appetite for a 20mph zone outside the school during school drop off/pick up. I've also been in touch with the Highways team and the school governors on the area around the school generally



Proposed site of school drop-off/car park

Four Houses Corner – Mortimer

I spoke as a non-voting ward member at the recent Planning Committee meeting. Whilst I, and others present, empathised with what Mrs Adlam (the late PC Harper's mother) went through/continues to go through, I shared again my understanding that the former residents have a legal right to return to that site. That single fact seems to render talk of locating the residents elsewhere impractical. That said, it came to light in the meeting, in response to a point raised by Mrs Adlam, that no alternative site had been explored since PC Harper's manslaughter in 2019. I don't know why.

A managing agent will be appointed to look after the site when it is reopened and is tasked to ensure tenants adhere to their agreements.

A comment was made at the meeting on what constitutes public consultation. In my day job in telecoms Product Management, I'm experienced in/passionate about customer engagement, a skill I planned to use to assist parish and now district council. In this particular case, although WBC undertook to run an online/face to face consultation, I saw a role for parish too in engaging the public on this Planning applications. To me the suggestion made at the meeting that the "ever present invite to parishioners to attend a planning committee meeting" constitutes public engagement is flawed. Expecting residents to find and understand issues that affect or interest them is not good enough in my mind. I think that another recent example shows the importance of drawing relevant applications to the public's attention. The letters issued by the new administration to potentially affected residents should help, although I have it on my Todo list to revise the letter template.

I'd be interested to know whether the statement "the council as operator of the site will have no excuse if this site reverts to a hotbed of criminality" represents the Planning Committee's views – I could not see it documented. The planning application was approved unanimously.

Windmill Court - Mortimer



Some remaining residents contacted me seeking my support, claiming they are being forced to accept accommodation outside Mortimer. My further concern is that such a step might become a means of bypassing the condition upon which redevelopment of the site would be permitted. As a petition organiser and ward member I am trying to pursue this with both with the association and the administration's Executive, before it is too late.

Electric Vehicle Charging

In 2020 the council ran a public consultation seeking people views on what the CIL should be spent on. Amongst other ideas, this included installation of electric vehicle charging in Mortimer car parks. The public as whole did not support this, mainly on cost grounds. I continued to explore the possibility of getting charging installed at no cost as part of WBC installs (one person suggested at the time that I had no mandate to continue with this). I have continued to lobby WBC from outside and since May '23 from within, to get include Mortimer/Burghfield/surrounds in its schemes. Noting the comment from C&E committee “general feeling that West Berks aren’t doing enough – responsibly will fall on individuals to pay” I’d be happy to discuss together. Meanwhile I’ll give details of near term plans in my next public facing newsletter.

Councillor Drop Ins

Unfortunately, the latest dates set for parish council surgeries are not convenient for me – on Thursday daytimes I am often in the studio and the evening usually clashes with Burghfield Parish Council meetings. Hopefully other days will be chosen in future. Meanwhile I run my district drop-in on most first Saturday’s whilst Vicky Poole runs one in Burghfield library. I see drop ins as supplementary to other and ad hoc forms and ways of public engagement. I think it would be great if we could combine district and parish matters at the same session. I dreamt about that being reality last night.

Nick Carter

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Issue Tracker

Some issues raised by residents and their status (for closed issues see older newsletters):

Topic	Raised	Action	Status
Alleged encroachment/planning	27 June	Heard concerns over alleged	6 Oct: Residents were updated. 10 Nov:

infringements/other		encroachment/Planning/other issues and residents understanding of what the council has/is doing about it.	follow up meeting within council. 20 Feb: review meeting. Correspondence issued to relevant property owner
Flooding	Nov '23	Concerns raised by Burghfield residents.	The matter is being primarily supported with by the Highways team but I and Vicky are closely engaged in the dialogue.
Windmill Court	Oct' 22	Understanding residents' requirement and engaging with housing association. Communicating plan and summarising the changes versus what existed before.	Nov '23: Invited public comment on plan. Jan '24: informed residents of Housing Association's moving costs reply.
Housing association repairs	23 Dec' 23	Alerted to concern on apparently poorly organised refurbishments to housing association properties,	Jan '24: emailed and raised case raised with council's Housing Association team
The Little Village Pharmacy's (formerly JHoots) has asked me to help them gain electronic access to prescriptions, to replace the old school method, in which an employee has to walk regularly to the dispensary, at the surgery, to get them. This arrangement is very unusual within West Berkshire.	1 Nov '23		19/2/24: tabled it for inclusion in Feb Healthcare Scrutiny meeting, with the Integrated Care Board. Raised during meeting, action promised.
Flooding in a Mortimer street relating to a pump system			Residents reports being contacted for upgrade work.
Objection about condition of BT Exchange near Tower Gardens			Supporting resident

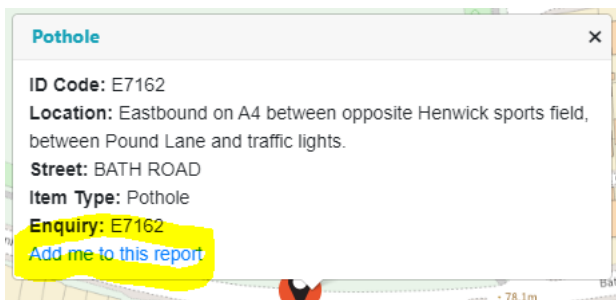
Frequently Asked Questions

Below summarises commonly raised council related questions and how to get them answered.

How Do I Report Highways and Countryside Problems?

The [online problem reporting system](#) allows residents (and parish councils) to report problems relating to Highways (potholes, dirty road signs, unemptied pavement bins and non-working street lights) and Countryside (unemptied bins in parks and footpaths). You can access the system [HERE](#) from a PC or mobile device.

You select the problem category from a list and mark the incident location on a map. You can (and ideally should) upload photos for pothole cases but should not try to measure their depth. You'll receive an email acknowledgement, giving an indicative response time. The incident is then reviewed and assigned a priority. A non-working pelican crossing, or a serious pothole for example, should be dealt with within a few hours of reporting, whilst a less serious pothole may take 28 days. You'll receive email updates as the incident progresses. If it is deemed a duplicate of a problem reported by others or dealt with already, you will be informed. You can nominate other people to receive notifications of the incident's progress.



We don't currently support the use of third-party apps. to raise problems, nor phoned in incidents, other than for out of hours emergencies.

Further streamlining of the systems and improvements to user interface are expected by the Autumn.

Meanwhile if you experience problems using the service, or an unusually poor response time, please let us know, ideally forwarding the relevant incident email(s).