

Mortimer Hobby Hall Planning Site Brief

This site brief has been prepared with reference to Mortimer Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan

"Mortimer has both a distinctive rural character stemming from its long history and its setting within woodland and agricultural land and a strong sense of community with a wide range of services and thriving small business economy. It is this vision of Mortimer, now and in the future, that forms the fundamental and distinctive focus for the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and informs all the policies of this Plan. In order to deliver such a vision it is also necessary to have a strategy. After widespread consultation the following strategic statements have been derived which sum up this vision in a practical sense."

9.2.1 General:

GD1 In order to provide high quality developments in the Parish, all developments of any sort shall comply with the following parameters

- New development will consider the amenity of existing residents adjacent to the new development
- Any new development within the settlement boundary will be encouraged to prepare a Site Design Brief, including community involvement, which reflects the policies set out in this Plan. This brief would then be included in any planning submission after consultation via the parish council.

The appropriate sections have been added to this site brief

Site Address: Garth Hall, St Johns Road, Mortimer, Berkshire

Introduction

Garth Club was founded in 1917 by Bertha Capron in memory of her nephew Nigel Halliley Capron for the boys and young men of Mortimer. She built a club house, known as Garth Hall 1917 and in 1941 it was presented to the YMCA in trust.

In 1959 the trust passed to the RBL where the club continued to be enjoyed and utilised by the local community. In 2012 the hall was closed after a problematic roof replacement as the RBL deemed the property as potentially unsafe. The hall has remained closed since 2012.

In 2023 RBL advised Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council they intended to sell the building unless another suitable organisation came forward to take over the trust. RBL selected 'Mortimer Hobby Hall' (MHH) to take over the hall and the trust.

Mortimer Hobby Hall is currently in the process of registering with the Charities Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It is an inclusive community lead project, based on the principles of the Men's Shed movement which aims to improve mental wellbeing and reduce social isolation amongst men and other vulnerable groups in our rural community.

The building has served the local community for over 100 years and MHH have secured the future of Garth Hall for future generations.

In 2016 RBL undertook a structural survey and also costed for the repairs which were estimated to be in the region of £150K. Since then the hall has continued to be unused.

MHH is an inclusive community lead project, based on the principles of the Men's Shed movement which aims to improve mental wellbeing and reduce social isolation amongst men and other vulnerable groups in our rural community.

According to the Samaritans website, there were 5,656 suicides registered in the UK in 2023, this was 372 more than in 2022 and more than 3 times as many men committed suicide than women. This figure rises significantly for middle aged men, who at all ages, are less likely than women to seek help or be referred for Mental Health services and support.

Currently there are several local provisions for activities that would typically appeal to females, however there are minimal activities locally that would typically appeal to men. In line with the Men's Shed ethos, the MHH will provide:

- A practical space where members can take part in a variety of activities all of which will be community led.
- A social space where members can relax, grab a cuppa and chat to others
- An inclusive and friendly atmosphere where everyone is welcomed and supported

Although as the name suggests, Men's Sheds are typically aimed at men, the trustees intend to create an inclusive space where all are welcome irrespective of gender, age, race, disability or other differences, and will also run a range of activities that would typically appeal to females, and to people of all ages, which everyone will be welcome to attend. One activity within MHH will be wood working activities and make a range of wooden items, including bird feeders, bird boxes and planters. These will be positioned so that they impact the local ecology and attractiveness of the village.

Mortimer has a range of local business including coffee shops, pubs, hairdressers, garages. MHH will attract people from surrounding villages into Mortimer, who it is envisaged will also benefit the local economy.

It is also planned to run a "Repair Café" where members of Mortimer and the surrounding villages can bring items for repair and so reducing waste which end up in land fill.

The project is aligned with the following key themes and priorities from the West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023 - 2027

- Ensure vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes
- Support everyone to reach their full potential
- Develop local infrastructure to support and grow the local economy
- Ensuring infrastructure needs arising from the growth in West Berkshire are provided to support and keep pace with development in accordance with the council strategy
- Optimise the use of previously developed land
- Contribute to the improvement in the Health and Wellbeing of all our residents



The building was erected in 1917 and to repair it, make it safe and bring it up to current standards could exceed any rebuild costs and so the proposal is to replace the building using the current footprint with a small fill in and to make it sustainable for hopefully the next 100 years. The proposal will also add a second floor giving more space for activities.



Proposal

The application is to build a new purpose designed two story building for use by the community with appropriate insulation and solar panels.

Character

The design of the building will fit in with the style and size of buildings in the local area, maintaining the streetscape and with appropriate parking prioritising disabled users. The site will be of open plan with the parking area using environmentally considerate materials. Users of the hall will be encouraged to walk and a survey of potential users gave 63% in favour of this mode of transport. There are some mature trees on site which will be kept and a low fence to the north of the site will be retained.

The total ground floor area is 280m² and this makes it a 'small premises' under the Building Regulations Part B (Fire Safety Regulations). The first-floor area is 162m². This is similar in area to many of the surrounding houses and therefore the hall would not appear large or dominant within the context of existing dwellings in the locality. The rebuild would maintain the current position within the plot and so would not appear significantly different from the existing hall.

It is considered it is unlikely that the proposal would have significant effect on the surrounding neighbourhood.

9.2.5 Building Design and Style

GD5 In order to develop homes which meet the requirements of 21st century lifestyles and improve the overall quality of the housing stock in the parish while remaining sympathetic to the older building styles at the heart of the village, all developments of any sort shall comply with the following parameters:

♣ New developments on allocated and windfall sites will be designed to the Lifetime Homes standard – **the revised building will be designed to last well into the next century.**

♣ The adoption of energy management technology will be encouraged in all new developments

The revised design will be insulated to the appropriate level and it is planned to install solar energy collection to reduce energy consumption further.

♣ Innovative designs which respect and are in sympathy with the rural vision of Mortimer and the vernacular style of the surrounding homes will be encouraged – **the building design and finish will be of a similar style to that which already exists within St Johns Road.**

♣ All dwellings shall be no more than two storeys in height, or three storeys where roof space is utilized; any apartment buildings should respect the scale of the surrounding houses – **The revised height of the building takes into account the height of the adjoining properties.**

. ♣ Sufficient space must be provided for the storage and collection of refuse and recycling for each dwelling - **a suitable and appropriately designed waste storage area will be provided.**

♣ House types should be in sympathy with the local vernacular, where appropriate, – **the building design and finish will be of a similar style to that which already exists within St Johns Road.**

Living Conditions

The overall height of the building will not exceed that of the neighbouring properties.

The hall is north of the adjacent property which already has been extended and so there will be no undue harm in respect of loss of light or overbearing effects.

Consideration has been given to the neighbours with the use of "velux" style windows on the upper floor meaning that the current neighbours will not be overlooked or suffer loss of privacy.

The bungalow to the north of the hall is sufficiently spaced from the hall and offset to the east so that the increased height for part of the hall will not have an impact on that property.

Suitable boundary treatment will ensure that any impact on surrounding properties in respect to noise and disturbance would be minimised.

Parking, highway safety and refuse

A disabled parking space will be provided as shown on the block plan and there will be space to allow for two spaces parked parallel to the building across the front once the porch is removed.

Exact layout will be produced once a full site survey has been conducted, however if it anticipated that the majority of uses will walk and there is also public car parking spaces within a short walking distance.

The activity manager will be responsible for ensuring that there is no parking on St Johns Road which is an unadopted road with limited car movements and at slow speed.

It is anticipated due to the above that there will not be significant increase in car movements, and this will not have any severe impacts to the local road network in terms of efficiency and capacity

9.2.2 Internal & External Access and Parking:

GD2 In order to provide high quality developments in the Parish, all developments of any sort shall comply with the following parameters

♣ Developments shall provide direct, safe and convenient pedestrian access to the village community facilities and the wider countryside, and will similarly seek cycle links, to encourage walking, cycling and social interaction (see also policy GS2) – **users of the hall will be encouraged to use existing parking where possible and only parking on site where necessary and for disabled drivers. A survey conducted early on in the process showed that 63% of people would walk to the hall.**

. ♣ The use of full height kerbs and asphalt surfacing will be limited, using alternative surface materials wherever possible such as pavements. – **the plan will be to have grass or gravel filled reinforced surfaces for parking and access, except for the pedestrian pathway round the building.**

9.2.4 Street Lighting

GD4 In order to avoid light pollution and intrusion, all developments of any sort shall comply with the following parameters:

♣ Low level lighting for pedestrians may be used if it avoids light pollution and intrusion, and the design retains the rural feel of the site. **Some illumination of the walkway and carpark will be necessary but this will be designed so that there is no intrusion of light to surrounding properties and will only be used when the building is occupied.**

9.2.5 Building Design and Style

GD5 - continued

. ♣ Sufficient space must be provided for the storage and collection of refuse and recycling for each dwelling - **a suitable and appropriately designed waste storage area will be provided and inline with West Berkshire's refuse and recycling policies.**

Ecology and trees

Currently the site is severely overgrown with a combination of brambles and other vegetation. Ivy is now covering significant parts of the building and the whole site looks run down.

It is anticipated that all the trees currently on site will be maintained but may need some professional work.

There is limited biodiversity at present and the site will be tidied up and the car parking surfaces will be of an ecological friendly type.

There is no evidence of protected species on site however post the building work it is anticipated that bird and bat boxes will be added to encourage them.

The front of the site will be tidied up to give the street scene a better feel.

All of the external lighting will be only active when the hall is in use and directed to illuminate the walkway for safety reasons and meeting the minimum levels necessary. This will be designed so that there is no intrusion of light to surrounding properties. Mortimer is a dark village without street lights and so this will be taken into consideration.

9.2.6 Landscape & Environment

GD6 In order to complement the Building Design and Style parameters by carrying through those elements into the hard and soft landscaping, all developments of any sort shall comply with the following parameters:

- ♣ Brick or natural boundaries and/or landscaping will be preferred, rather than standard fencing panels. – **the current open style fencing is planned to be retained, and that to the south will be considered in consultation the adjoining properties.**
- ♣ Any local pattern of trees and hedgerows will be reflected in the landscaping which will feature native trees. – **it is not anticipated that any of the native trees on site will be affected but some will need some professional work.**
- ♣ Environmentally friendly features - such as bat boxes and hedgehog gates- shall be specified in any ecology strategy and included in the landscape and building design. – **this will be considered once a more formal site evaluation has occurred.**
- ♣ An integrated SUDS drainage strategy will be adopted, as part of these landscaping measures, taking account of sewage system capacity, flood risk and water quality. – **it is not anticipated that there will be any increase input to the existing drainage system within the area. By the use of appropriate external surfaces it is not anticipated that hard surfaces areas will be increased above those already existing. Existing roof drainage will be used.**

Energy Efficiency

The current building is of a single brick skin, with an un-insulated roof space and single glazed timber framed windows.

The new building will be to the latest thermal requirements and very energy efficient and it is anticipated that solar panels will be fitted to as much of the roof as possible and this energy used appropriately withing the building.

Other matters

The car park will be locked when not is used to prevent antisocial behaviour within that space.

9.2.3 Flood management

GD3 In order to ensure that flooding risk is not increased, and ideally is reduced, taking into account climate change, all developments of any sort shall comply with the following parameters:

- In addition to having well designed, constructed and managed flood prevention measures to reduce the overall level of flood risk in accordance with West Berkshire Council's policy CS16,

By the use of appropriate external surfaces it is not anticipated that hard surfaces areas will be increased above those already existing. Existing roof drainage will be used.

IS1 Telecommunications – it is proposed that the hall is supplied with superfast broadband via the West Berks Community Broadband Scheme and this could then be a hub for the residents of St John's Road.

Summary

The rebuild of the hall will provide Mortimer and the surrounding areas with a facility for all to use which will improve the mental and social wellbeing of all those who attend the activities.