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Mr R O'Keefe
Chief Executive Officer
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

23 September 2025

Dear Mr O'Keefe

Local Plan: Updated Proposed Spatial Strategy

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) (West Berkshire) wishes to place on record its strong objection to the proposed allocation of "**Land at West End Farm, Mortimer**" (Policy SPS5.15) for approximately 350 homes and a Gypsy and Traveller site.

Although the land lies within Basingstoke and Deane (Hampshire), its location means that the development would function as an **extension of Mortimer (West Berkshire)**, as is explicitly acknowledged in the Updated Proposed Spatial Strategy. This raises several serious issues:

1 - Alignment with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Key Principles

In our view the proposal conflicts with Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council's stated strategy:

Focus of Growth at Basingstoke

"The Local Plan focuses development primarily on Basingstoke" (Local Plan 4.14)

Mortimer lies adjacent to the borough edge and has weak transport and employment links into Hampshire.

Sustainable Rural Growth

"The aim of the Local Plan is to direct development to within the identified Settlement Boundaries and specific site allocations. Within the countryside it is the intention to maintain the existing open nature of the borough's countryside, prevent the coalescence of settlements and resist the encroachment of development into rural areas" (Local Plan 4.70). "The strategy will maximise opportunities for development within built up areas and on previously developed land, to minimise

greenfield development and create sustainable communities” (Local Plan: Updated Proposed Spatial Strategy 3.4 bullet 2).

A greenfield development of this scale threatens Mortimer’s established identity as a rural village and its attractiveness as a place to live. A large rural site such as is proposed is in direct contradiction to both the Policy and the Strategy.

Neighbourhood Planning

A key approach of the Local Plan is for local communities to manage their environment through the provision of neighbourhood plans and orders (Local Plan 4.39). “Neighbourhood Planning will be supported as the key vehicle for shaping future change in such areas” (Local Plan: Updated Proposed Spatial Strategy 3.4 bullet 4).

The site summary fails to reference either the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017) (NDP) or the emerging Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Any proposal for development must be explicitly bound by Mortimer’s existing or upcoming Neighbourhood Plans.

2 - Retention of Mortimer’s identity (with the Neighbourhood Plan as the key vehicle)

As above, under the Localism Act (2011), Mortimer has an existing NDP and an emerging NP, both of which grant the community of Mortimer a say in any future development.

As above, Basingstoke and Deane’s Updated Proposed Spatial Strategy (Policy SPS 5.15 para 5.15.1) states that the land at West End Farm, Mortimer would “form an extension to Mortimer” (emphasis added).

In the event that, despite this letter, (a) the site remains in the draft Local Plan, (b) that Plan proceeds to examination, and (c) it becomes an adopted site, integration with the village and conformity with the NDP/NP is essential – Stratfield Mortimer local planning policies must govern, (a) the design of any development, and (b) integration with the existing Mortimer village. Without this, the development risks Mortimer’s identity, and is disingenuous to the legally granted rights of the community under the Localism Act.

Key features of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plans

- **Vision Statement:** Prioritising Mortimer’s rural environment and community identity.
- **Design Codes (5.15.2):** Basingstoke and Deane states that no design code is required. This conflicts with the NDP and NP policies, which already set binding codes and standards to ensure that building character and village layout reflect Mortimer’s established identity.

- **Housing Needs Assessment Type and Mix (5.15.1):** There is a strong requirement for starter and downsizing homes in Mortimer NP's Housing Needs Assessment. Any deviation would conflict with the vision of Mortimer community expressed need and established policy.
- **Lighting Dark Village Policy:** Mortimer's NDP and NP have a "dark village" policy, with strict limits on external lighting in residential, public, and commercial developments.
- **Flood Management and SUDS (introduction point m and 5.15.11):** The NPPF requires site design to reduce surface water and downstream flooding risks. To this end any development must adhere to the Mortimer NDP and NP flood risk policies on rainfall volumes, intensities, and run off.
- **Climate and Energy:** Shared community energy facilities, EV charging provision, and hotspot mitigation measures policies are a part of Mortimer's NDP and NP.
- **Irreplaceable Habitats (introduction point n):** West End Brook discharges into the Foudry Brook, a chalk stream of ecological importance. Any development must adopt the relevant policies (sewage, nutrient loading, and run-off controls) in the Mortimer NDP and NP.
- **Local Economy:** Any retail and commercial provision must be of limited scale, consistent with guidance laid out in Mortimer's NDP and NP, and positioned to complement—not compete with—the existing village centre.
- **Transport & Connectivity (5.15.3):** Mortimer is connected locally via narrow, quiet roads, and limited sustainable transport links. Rail services are limited, car parking is already insufficient, and no viable bus connections exist other than to Reading. Mortimer's NDP and NP focus on improving connectivity via sustainable transport connections.

3 - Cross-Boundary Issues: Infrastructure, Services, and Funding

The proposed development at West End Farm would impact heavily on cross county services within Mortimer. Services within Mortimer, including GP capacity, school places, train station parking, and bus links are already under strain.

Before allocation of any cross-boundary site for development:

- A full **cross-boundary impact assessment** must be undertaken, led by West Berkshire Council, establishing the requirements and costs.
- The adjoining council, in this case Basingstoke and Deane, must guarantee funding through **CIL, S106, and if necessary additional budget contributions** to secure the essential upgrades.

Without this, the site would undermine Mortimer's sustainability.

4 - Highways

Basingstoke and Dean's Transport Strategy (as aligned to its Local Plan) states: *"This strategy aims to improve access, public transport, and walking/cycling infrastructure while reducing car dependency."*

Most new inhabitants of the village will work in locations remote from Mortimer, as Mortimer offers limited opportunity for employment. Allocation of a site on the rural edge of the Borough is inconsistent with Basingstoke and Deane's sustainable transport principle.

Mortimer's highways infrastructure is already inadequate. Increased car dependency from new residents would intensify congestion, parking pressures and safety risks, particularly as Mortimer has limited public transport alternatives. Any site allocation must address this shortfall up front, not after development proceeds, to the satisfaction of West Berkshire Council Highways and SMPC.

5 - Conclusion

For these reasons, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council is **opposed to the site in principle**. We believe this proposal should be identified as **highly controversial** and flagged accordingly before formal consultation begins.

We note that, disappointingly, no attempt has been made to engage with this Council, nor its Councillors, nor (so far as we are aware) the West Berkshire Council Ward Councillors, to date on this issue. We strongly encourage engagement with community officials on any potential development.

We respectfully urge Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to reconsider the inclusion of SPS5.15 in the draft Local Plan. If pursued, it risks imposing significant unmitigated harm on neighbouring West Berkshire communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Bridgman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Graham Bridgman

Chairman, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council