Minutes of the Stratfield Mortimer Parish Meeting held at the Mortimer Community Centre on Saturday 25 October 2025

Draft subject to approval

Present

Panel

Cllr Graham Bridgman (Chairman of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council [SMPC], a member of the SMPC Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group [NPSG], and Chairman of the Meeting), Jo Emberson-Wines (Chairman of the NPSG), Cllr Dave Kilshaw (Vice-Chairman of SMPC), Doug Overett (Chairman of Mortimer Village Partnership [MVP] and member of the NPSG) and Cllr Andrew Richardson (Chairman of the SMPC Planning and Highways Committee)

Minute taker

Danielle Davis, SMPC Clerk

Residents

Approximately 250 residents of Stratfield Mortimer and neighbouring parishes

Meeting

1 Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Graham Bridgman opened the meeting at 19:00.

He welcomed all attendees and explained that this Parish Meeting had been called in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 in response to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's [B&D] proposal for a 350 dwelling development and gypsy/travellers' site at West End Farm [the Site], on the border of B&D/Hampshire and West Berkshire.

He then introduced the panel members and the Clerk.

He said that draft minutes would be produced and circulated as soon as possible, but (unless another Parish Meeting was called in the interim) would wait until the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2026 for formal approval.

A show of hands indicated that nearly all attendees were residents of the Stratfield Mortimer Parish (and an approximate headcount was undertaken by Sallyann Taylor, the SMPC Deputy Clerk).

Cllr Bridgman then outlined the role of SMPC, its Committees (including its Planning and Highways Committee), their Steering Groups (including the NPSG) and Working Parties, explaining how they interrelate.

He summarised the timeline leading to this Meeting:

- The proposal was first identified via a Newbury Weekly News article on 4 September 2025, referring to a B&D Environment and Infrastructure Committee meeting due to take place that evening.

- The NPSG discussed the matter on 16 September 2025 and proposed that SMPC write to B&D to object.
- The SMPC Planning & Highways Committee approved this approach on 18 September 2025 and a letter of objection (signed by himself as SMPC Chairman) was sent to B&D on 23 September 2025, copied to West Berkshire Council [WBC].
- He, together with other SMPC councillors and members of the NPSG, had attended a Mortimer West End Parish Council meeting on 2 October 2025 at which the B&D Leader and relevant Planning Portfolio Holder had spoken and answered questions.
- Following a further discussion at the Planning & Highways Committee meeting on 9 October 2025 it was agreed to hold a public meeting to update residents (and he thanked Cllr Kilshaw for managing to organise this Meeting within a fortnight).

Cllr Bridgman then asked for a show of hands of anyone who didn't have an email address. There were none.

He encouraged everyone to complete (on-line if at all possible to make assimilating the answers easier) the SMPC questionnaire that had recently been delivered with the MVP newsletter, and to provide their email addresses so that they could be sent updates etc direct (including the draft minutes of this Meeting).

Cllr Bridgman also said that he understood that B&D intended to hold their own consultation meetings in December and January at the Community Centre (but he anticipated that these would be exhibition style, rather than meetings such as this with a panel, etc).

2 The Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan

Cllr Andrew Richardson provided background to the B&D Local Plan Update and the process leading to the inclusion of the Site for proposed development.

Key points included:

- The current B&D Local Plan was adopted in 2016 and runs until 2029, but must be reviewed every five years.
- A new National Planning Policy Framework, issued in December 2024, and revised national housing targets (1.5m homes during this Parliament) have led to a substantial increase in housing need for B&D.
- The new standard method has raised B&D's housing target from 850 dwellings per annum (dpa) to 1,152 dpa – an uplift of over 35%, creating a need for approximately 6,000 additional homes.
- Following a call for sites in January 2025, the Site was put forward.
- The papers presented to the B&D Environment and Infrastructure Committee on 4 September 2025 included potential new sites totalling just over 4,000 dwellings—so seemingly still 2,000 short of the full requirement.

If B&D don't manage to get a Local Plan passed which includes sufficient housing to meet their targets, we are likely to get planning by appeal and a developers' free for all, with sites all over B&D given permission via planning appeal even if they were initially refused permission by B&D (as had happened previously in Wokingham).

Cllr Richardson then outlined the next stages of Local Plan making process:

- Regulation 18 [Reg 18] Consultation (expected late November 2025 to January 2026) is the first opportunity for formal public representation.
- Regulation 19 [Reg 19] follows, before submission to the Secretary of State and public examination by an Independent Examiner.

Reg 18 is a vital stage for us and we needed to get our act together – this would be discussed later in the meeting when we talked about next steps.

Reg 19 is where the draft Plan that it is proposed should be submitted to the Secretary of State is published including all of the representations to date. There is another opportunity to make representations at Reg 19 stage.

If the Site proposal survives the Reg 18 and 19 stages and is in the submitted Plan, the next step will be the public examination of the draft by an Independent Examiner appointed by the Secretary of State.

3 The emerging Neighbourhood Plan and the role of West Berkshire Council

Jo Emberson-Wines provided an overview of the Neighbourhood Plan process, explaining that the Localism Act 2011 enables communities to shape local planning policy:

- Following a request from SMPC, WBC had established a 'Neighbourhood Plan Area' as the Parish of Stratfield Mortimer.
- Stratfield Mortimer's current Neighbourhood Development Plan [NDP] was adopted in 2017 and remains in force.
- Work on a new Neighbourhood Plan [NP] began around 2021, with the aim of adoption in 2026.
- The process includes drafting policies, consultation (Ms Emberson-Wines referred to the recent consultations at St John's School), independent examination, and finally adoption following a community referendum.

The Site lies outside the NP Area, and neither the NDP nor NP apply to it. B&D have described the potential development as an "extension of Mortimer", but legally the NDP/NP have no authority.

The NPSG has sought advice on producing an addendum to the emerging draft NP, to refer to the Site.

Ms Emberson-Wines also referred to WBC's 'Duty to Cooperate' under the Localism Act 2011, including strategic engagement with neighbouring planning authorities, preparation of Statements of Common Ground, and shared evidence on infrastructure and environmental matters. We needed to press forward to establish exactly what WBC considered that Duty to entail.

4 Current Areas of Objection

Doug Overett outlined seven principal areas of objection identified thus far by the NPSG/SMPC:

- Healthcare Capacity – a reliance on West Berkshire health services, a split jurisdiction between the Hampshire and BOB (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West) Integrated Care Boards (NHS areas), and Mortimer Surgery already at capacity.
- Education – a lack of provision for school places and potential disruption to catchment areas.
- Infrastructure – a rural road network unable to sustain construction and residential traffic; pressure on utilities, drainage, and digital connectivity.
- Planning and Governance – site lies outside Mortimer's NDP; large-scale development conflicts with local planning principles.
- Environment and Landscape – loss of greenfield land, biodiversity impacts, and conflict with brownfield-first policies.

- Cross-Border Services – unclear accountability for waste, emergency response, and service provision.
- Community Identity and Safety – a risk of settlement coalescence and increased demand on policing and community services.

Mr Overett stressed that the objections were not anti-development, but against unsustainable, uncoordinated expansion.

5 Statement by Cllr Nick Carter

Cllr Bridgman read out a statement from District Councillor Nick Carter (who had recently resigned from the NPSG) apologising for not being able to attend the Meeting and setting out what he had done/was doing to oppose the development.

Cllr Bridgman noted that he and other parish councillors had recently attended a WBC District Parish Conference, where he had taken the opportunity to speak to Cllr Jeff Brooks (Leader of WBC) and Cllr Denise Gaines (WBC Portfolio Holder for Planning) about the issue, and reiterated that communication with WBC is ongoing.

6 Community Infrastructure Levy

To support residents' understanding, Cllr Bridgman explained how the Community Infrastructure Levy [CIL] impacted the process.

- CIL is paid by developers to the local planning authority in relation to certain types of development on the basis of the size of the development.
- Parish Councils without a Neighbourhood Plan (eg Mortimer West End PC) receive 10% of CIL income, capped annually by reference to the number of dwellings in the parish.
- By contrast, parishes with a made Neighbourhood Plan (such as Stratfield Mortimer) receive 25% of CIL, uncapped - as an example, SMPC anticipated receiving approximately £300,000 from the Tower Gardens development over time.
- Had the Site been within the NP Area, SMPC would expect around £1 million as its share of CIL if the proposal proceeded.

7 Next Steps

Cllr Dave Kilshaw emphasised the need for a coordinated approach - whilst residents may make individual representations during Reg 18 (and were encouraged to), the Parish Council would prepare a comprehensive, planning-based response.

He proposed that an SMPC Working Party be established by the SMPC Planning and Highways Committee to unite SMPC, the NPSG, the 'Turks Lane Group' that had already begun to coordinate local objections, Mortimer West End representatives, and interested others.

It was proposed to take this to the meeting of the Planning & Highways Committee taking place the following Thursday (30 October 2025).

The idea was that the Working Party will guide residents, share updates, and coordinate evidence gathering. Residents were strongly encouraged to sign up for SMPC email communications to receive updates and action guidance.

Expressions of interest from those wishing to engage with and join the proposed Working Party were sought and a number of individuals came forward – details were taken after the meeting closed.

It was added that legal and planning support may be sought and funded via the precept if required.

Cllr Bridgman emphasised that any steps taken by any Working Party once established should not be seen as taking the place of representations from residents generally to the Reg 18 Consultation (although we didn't want a multitude of responses all saying the same thing, but rather individual responses making different points (or the same points but in different ways)).

8 Open Forum

Cllr Bridgman opened the discussion to those present, and residents raised a wide range of questions and comments, including:

- Lobbying the landowner (Englefield Estate) – Cllr Bridgman said that there was nothing to stop anyone contacting the landowner directly (and a point was made regarding a potential conflict with the Estate's standing on the environment).
- Village boundary changes – whilst it might appear that we could seek to extend to parish boundary to include the Site, the understanding that this would need cross-border agreement from B&D and WBC mitigated against it.
- Changes to local government structures – the absorption of B&D into a different unitary structure, and the possible introduction of a locally elected regional mayor, were discussed. Cllr Bridgman though that this emerging, revised, Local Plan was likely to survive any changes and we needed to continue with the Reg 18 response process.
- Timeline – Cllr Bridgman anticipated that the Reg 18 Consultation would open in late November and continue (for eight weeks) into January 2026, with Reg 19 in Autumn 2026 and the Public Examination in early 2027.
- Primary objective – whilst the immediate aim is to remove the Site from the Local Plan, we had to accept that it might nevertheless go ahead. The secondary aim must therefore be to ensure that our local planning policies (ie the NP) apply to the Site because we need something that B&D themselves describe as "an extension to Mortimer" to look a and feel like Mortimer. There should also be a consequent aim to get some CIL receipts to pay for what would undoubtedly be an impact on Stratfield Mortimer's infrastructure.
- Traveller site inclusion – the point was made that this wasn't just a housing proposal since the B&D policy currently adds gypsy and traveller pitches to sites exceeding 200 dwellings, including this one. Cllr Bridgman explained that, similarly to the danger of planning by appeal generally, there was a danger of gypsy and traveller sites being created by appeal if B&D had insufficient pitches across its district.
- Need for social housing - a resident shared their views on the importance of social housing for those needing it and to clarify the B&D meaning of traveller's sites for the development. The need for affordable housing was recognised (the B&D policy is the same as WBC's – 40% affordable housing on greenfield sites).
- Petition vs Parish Poll – Cllr Bridgman explained the difference. A petition to WBC would trigger a council debate if there were enough signatures. A parish poll was formal and costly, but might be justified if the question or questions could be sufficiently crafted. He suggested that these were matters for the proposed Working Party to debate.
- Cross-border evidence – there was a need for data relating to (eg) healthcare and education capacity – again, the idea was for this to be coordinated by the proposed Working Party.
- AWE zones – the Site lies outside either of the AWE Aldermaston or Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zones. It lies immediately adjacent to both Outer Consultation Zones which meant that B&D would have to consult the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

- Neighbourhood Plan extension – it is too late in the process to seek to join the Mortimer West End parish into the NP Area (even assuming they would want this), but we need joint working between the parishes, and the proposed Working Party should follow this up.

9 Close

Cllr Bridgman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20:30.