

Employment, Facilities & Services Policy

Policy Statement

Objectives

The policies for employment, facilities and services seek to:

- Minimise the loss of existing employment land or premises unless there is no reasonable prospect of continued viable use.
- Reuse and renovate existing premises, increasing energy efficiency and incorporating zero-carbon energy generation where possible.
- Direct new retail and service development towards the Mortimer Village commercial centre, or where appropriate, to the reuse of farm/rural buildings and existing commercial sites.
- Support small-scale expansion of existing employment premises and the conversion of existing buildings within the Mortimer Settlement Boundary.
- Direct large-scale commercial, office and industrial activity, warehousing and distribution developments to designated Protected Employment Areas, consistent with WBC Policy SP17.
- Safeguard community facilities, ensuring they are retained, improved, or replaced, in order to support a strong and sustainable local community.

Loss or Change of Use of Employment Sites and Premises – Policy EFS1

Proposals for the change of use of land or premises, or their loss, will only be supported where they comply with WBC Policies SP17, DM35 (for non-DEA premises and sites), and clause 12.73 of DM39.

Development proposals resulting in loss must demonstrate:

1. That the change will not harm the vitality and viability of Mortimer's commercial centre; and
2. Compliance with WBC LPR paragraph 7.20 (June 2025) requirements, including marketing and viability evidence.

Policy Requirements

A robust marketing report showing the site was marketed at a realistic price for at least six months, with evidence including:

- confirmation by the agent of appropriate, extensive marketing.
- enquiry logs and follow-up reviews.
- copies of property particulars, signage photographs, online advertisement screenshots and associated analysis.

A commercial viability study detailing financial viability and measures taken to restore the business to a sustainable position.

Provision of New Employment Premises and Sites – POLICY EFS2

New premises and sites shall:

- a. Be located within the Mortimer Village commercial centre), or
- b. Reuse existing farm or rural buildings, or
- c. Occupy previously developed commercial/industrial land.

All proposals must:

- Adhere to WBC Policy DM35 (particularly clause e) and the Design Codes in this Plan.
- Avoid significant adverse impacts on local residents, businesses, and countryside users from noise, smell, dust, pollution, traffic, lighting, or unreasonable hours of operation.
- Provide superfast broadband capability with modern ducting and internal infrastructure.
- Be of a scale appropriate to the locality. Large-scale commercial, office, industrial, warehousing, or distribution developments will not be supported.

Reuse of Farm and Rural Buildings – Policy EFS3

Proposals for the reuse of farm or rural buildings will be supported where they:

- Are suitable for a rural location and compatible with surrounding uses;
- Demonstrate high quality design, appropriate siting, scale, massing, and character;
- Do not result in adverse effects on the locality, including noise, pollution, and lighting;
- Do not create large-scale retail, office, or industrial developments inconsistent with the rural setting.

Community Facilities and Services – Policy EFS4

The following community facilities are identified as important to Mortimer and will be safeguarded:

- Village Hall
- Community Centre
- Churches
- Public Houses
- Alfred Palmer Field
- Garth Hall
- Fairground
- St. Marys & St Johns Schools
- Mortimer Library
- Additionally, the provision of Doctors & Dental Practices

Development proposals leading to the loss or significant change of these facilities will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that:

- The facility is no longer required to serve the community, or
- Adequate replacement provision of equal or greater community value is made in an accessible location.

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) shall be informed at the earliest opportunity of any proposed change or loss to:

- Enable appropriate community consultation,
- Allow consideration of Community Rights powers, and
- Agree a way forward with the landowner.

New Employment Opportunities – Policy EFS5

Proposals for new business development will be supported where they provide for micro-enterprises or small-scale businesses that:

- Are proportionate in scale to the village and its rural context.
- Meet the design standards in this Plan; and
- Contribute to the sustainable growth of Mortimer's economy.

Supporting Projects (Non-Policy)

- **Station Car Park Expansion:** The current car park is insufficient to meet demand. Expansion proposals, previously halted for financial reasons, remain a priority and will be supported when circumstances permit.
 - **Business Needs Survey:** SMPC will carry out a survey with local businesses and service providers to identify needs for expansion, barriers to operation, opportunities for innovation, and potential for home-working hubs or co-working spaces.
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Supporting Text

These policies are consistent with:

- NPPF (December 2024):
 - Paragraphs 88–89: Supporting a prosperous rural economy.
 - Section on strong, vibrant communities and accessible services.
- WBC Local Plan Review (Approved June 2025):
 - Policy SP17 Strategic Approach to Employment Land
 - Policy DM35 Sustaining a Prosperous Rural Economy
 - Policy DM36 Farm Diversification
 - Policy DM39 Local Community Facilities