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The Rt Hon the Lord Benyon GCVO

By Email only

14 November 2025

Dear Lord Benyon

West End Farm, Mortimer West End

I am writing to you on behalf of the Parish Council, and following a meeting yesterday when the text of this letter was agreed.

On 25 October, a Stratfield Mortimer Parish Meeting - convened in response to concerns expressed by parishioners about the proposal in the (then emerging, since put forward for consultation) Basingstoke & Deane draft Local Plan for 350 new dwellings on Estate land at West End Farm – was attended by over 250 local residents.

Before turning to the outcome of that meeting and the drafting of this letter, Council Members wish me to place on record that this council fully appreciates the pressures placed upon local authorities by Westminster to increase housing provision.

Having said this, the proposed location raises significant concerns for this Council and the community we serve, since it lies in Hampshire, and thus outside the West Berkshire Council area and this Parish. Despite this, the papers presented to the Basingstoke & Deane Cabinet at its meeting last Tuesday explicitly stated that the site *“would form an extension to Mortimer”*. With respect to the Estate, that is a staggering understatement.

Our current understanding (which was not contradicted by either the Leader of Basingstoke & Deane BC or the relevant Portfolio Holder in a meeting attended by them and a number of SMPC Councillors), is that any development, (a) would not be subject to the planning principles in the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan or the emerging Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan, and (b) would not produce any Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for this parish, to offset the undoubted infrastructure costs landed upon SMPC (and, even more relevantly, West Berkshire Council). Fundamentally we face having housing imposed upon the

village that could be out of keeping with stated design requirements for, and the established character of, the village.

At the Parish Meeting, many parishioners voiced concerns that this proposal appears to conflict with several of the guiding principles of the Englefield Estate as set out on the website: *"We take pride in our heritage, including the contribution we make to the local economy, the environment and local communities"*.

This Council has enjoyed a long-standing and positive collaborative relationship with the Estate, and it is our sincere intention to continue that relationship in the same spirit - working together with our parishioners to achieve a satisfactory and balanced outcome.

We would therefore be grateful if you could clarify the reasons behind the submission of this site and the considerations that were taken into account in its inclusion within the Basingstoke & Deane Call for Sites that has led it to be included in the emerging draft Local Plan.

Finally, a meeting with you would be beneficial to inform this council's understanding of the Estate's intentions.

Yours sincerely

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

Graham Bridgman

Chairman, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council