



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning & Highways Committee held on Thursday 19 February 2026 at Mortimer Methodist Church Hall, West End Road, Mortimer, RG7 3TB

Present

Members

Cllrs G Bridgman, S Child, S Hill, M Lock and J Todd (Chairman).

Other Councillors

None

Officers of the Council

S Taylor

Public/Press

6 members of the public attended. This included 2 representatives from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) and one representative from TA Fisher. There were no members of the press.

Commencement

The meeting commenced at 19:30

Part I

25/179 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs M Dennett and D Kilshaw, and no apologies were received from Cllr J Allan

25/180 To receive any declarations of interest

None were received.

25/181 Public Questions

One member of the public raised a query regarding the entrance to St John's Road, which is in a bad state. Planning permission 91/38756, relating to the conversion of a veterinary surgery to offices was discussed. As part of that permission, a condition was imposed requiring the applicant to upgrade and maintain the unadopted and unmetalled road from the Summerlug Footpath to its junction with West End Road.

There didn't appear to be any paperwork relating to the discharge of that planning condition in the West Berkshire Council (WBC) paperwork, and it didn't appear that

the required works were ever carried out. The Deputy Clerk was asked to contact WBC to clarify why the condition was not enforced.

The remaining members of the public were present to discuss planning application 25/02941/FULMAJ (Agenda Item 25/187). It was agreed that their questions would be addressed when the relevant agenda item was reached.

25/182 Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee Meeting held on 29 January were received with no amendments and resolved for signature by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

25/183 Chairman's remarks

Cllr Todd thanked the Committee for reading all the additional meeting papers. She also thanked the members of the NPSG for all their hard work.

25/184 Items to be taken into private session

Not needed.

25/185 Steering Group Reports

1 To receive the draft minutes from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 3 February.

The committee noted that the minutes from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) meetings of the 3 February had been received.

2 To receive an update from the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Steering Group.

Cllr Todd said the Steering Group is currently monitoring the number of objections. Cllr Bridgman reported that we were close to 1000 objections.

25/186 Items for consideration

1 To review the West Berkshire District Council Draft Planning Enforcement Plan and agree any comments and further actions before the close of the consultation period on 9 March 2026.

The Committee had reviewed the Draft Planning Enforcement prior to the meeting and Cllr Todd highlighted she will be submitting the following individual comment:
- West Berkshire Council is encouraged to consider introducing an upper time limit for Level 4 investigations to ensure that low-priority or non-expedient cases do not remain open indefinitely. While it is understood that these matters are unlikely to result in significant harm, the absence of any defined timeframe risks creating uncertainty for residents and undermining confidence in the enforcement process. Setting a clear maximum duration—after which cases are either closed or formally reviewed—would strengthen transparency, improve service efficiency, and provide greater assurance that all reported concerns are handled in a timely and proportionate manner.

There were no other comments from the Committee.

25/187 Schedule of Planning Applications for consideration

25/02941/FULMAJ: Redwoods The Street Mortimer Common Reading RG7 3RD

Demolition of existing residential property known as Redwoods; Creation of a new hard and soft play and habitat area for St Johns Infant School; Provision of a new car park providing 17 no. parking spaces for school staff, to be accessed off The Street via the existing access serving Redwoods; Erection of 32no. retirement properties (Use

Class C3) age restricted to over 55's with communal amenity space and pavilion, parking and associated infrastructure, and landscaping; and Erection of a dental surgery falling with use class E, with a floor area of 705 sqm with parking and associated infrastructure, and landscaping.

A discussion was held between the Planning and Highways committee members, Bob Coe and Doug Overett from the NPSG, Steve Davies from TA Fisher, and members of the public. The points raised during this discussion were used to inform and formulate SMPC's response as set out below.

SMPC Comments: At its meeting on 19 February 2026, the Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council's ("SMPC") Planning and Highways Committee considered the application and resolved to, (a) **object** to the application upon the following grounds and, (b) make the following comments upon, (i) the objection from the BOB ICB and, (ii) one element of the call-in by Cllr Carter.

OBJECTION

Background

NDP and NP

In 2017 the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017 to 2026 ("NDP") was adopted following a local referendum. One of the principal purposes of the NDP, and the focus of many of its policies, was the development of a site within Mortimer to meet West Berkshire Council's ("WBC") housing requirement for Mortimer (the preferred site ("the Site") being designated as MOR006 in the WBC Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document and SM3 in the WBC Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment).

SMPC is currently drafting a replacement for the NDP via its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group ("NPSG") - the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan 2026 to 2041 ("NP") - with a Regulation 14 consultation anticipated shortly.

The NDP Site and the Reserved Land

Planning permission was initially granted for the development of the Site under 17/03004/OUTMAJ: *"This outline application comprises two parts: Part a) The erection of 110 dwellings including affordable housing, public open space and associated landscaping with all matters reserved other than access and layout; Part b) The erection of a 3FE Infant School and 900sq m GP surgery (Use Class D1) with shared parking area with all matters reserved other than access."*

Further to numerous subsequent planning applications (at the date of this note the WBC planning portal refers to 120 related cases), part a) of 17/03004 is being built out by this applicant, TA Fisher & Sons Ltd ("TAF"), as 'Tower House Farm'.

This application relates to part b), which in turn related to land within the Site identified for community development of a school and doctors' surgery ("the Reserved Land"). Part of the NPSG's task from SMPC (set out in its terms of reference) has been to keep a watching brief over the development of the Reserved Land.

The Reserved Land and NDP Review

Some of what follows is set out in the applicant's Planning Statement dated December 2025 ("the Statement").

It will be immediately noted that this application makes no reference to the erection of a school or a doctors' surgery. This is because it became apparent that (i) despite initial data from WBC, the projected number of children at St John's School did not,

in fact, justify the building of a new school by WBC, and (ii) the Mortimer Surgery was not interested in moving to a new site.

As a result, and as part of a wider public consultation regarding the emerging NP, parishioners were engaged in a debate over alternative uses for the Reserved Land with, fundamentally, two alternatives – one involving the purchase and demolition of Redwoods, and the other without that option. There was also engagement with TAF with the result that SMPC resolved to revise that part of the NDP relating to the Reserved Land.

As set out in the Statement, there were three SMPC resolutions relating (at least in part) to the Reserved Land, the latter two (14 September 2023 and 11 July 2024) leading to this application.

Objection

1 Lack of site design brief and engagement with Parish Council

The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (“NDP”) includes:

(8.2) *“The Site Design Brief for any future site will include:*

- *the mix of housing types and tenures which will be determined in accordance with these general policies*
- *the housing density pattern.”*

and

(Policy GD1) *“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.”*

Policy SDB1 is extracted in the Statement at 5.37 and includes (emphasis added): *“A detailed design brief **must** be prepared by the developer. This brief **must** be subject to discussion with Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council and the community within a reasonable period prior to the submission of a planning application to West Berkshire”.*

TAF is fully aware of the requirement for a site design brief and prior consultation with SMPC and the community. Indeed, it fully engaged with SMPC in producing two previous schemes for development of the Reserved Land, the first anticipating 20 new over-55’s dwellings, and the second 24 - these consultations are reflected in the Statement as leading to the SMPC amended resolution of July 2024 (see, eg, the Statement at 3.11).

What the Statement fails to do is provide any explanation as to why, having got SMPC onside with a development envisaging 24 new dwellings, TAF failed to engage regarding a wholly different proposal for 32 including a three storey apartment block. Had it done so, and had the plans been amended to reduce the apartment block height and accord with the NDP (see below), this objection may have been avoided.

2 Excessive height of apartment block and failure to comply with NDP policy

According to the Statement at 5.35 *“Policy GD5 relates to building design and style requirements, including that development should be in keeping with the rural vision of Mortimer, and that two and three storey development is suitable”.*

This is fundamentally inaccurate. Policy GD5 is explicit that three storey development is not suitable. The relevant part of GD5 reads (emphasis added):

*“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:***

...

- *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”.*

‘Shall’ is the operative word – GD5 does not permit three storey buildings unless the third storey is built into the roof (as is the case with some buildings within the Site). The requirement that apartment buildings should respect the scale of surrounding houses is subservient to the maximum height requirement, not in place of it.

The proposal for the apartment block is in breach of planning policy.

COMMENTS

Integrated Care Board objection dated 11 February 2026

Despite what is said in the letter from the ICB there has been considerable engagement with the Mortimer Surgery and the NHS more widely. Indeed, the SMPC Chairman was at the material time the WBC representative on the Integrated Care Partnership and sought to engage the ICB in the conversation about funding a doctors’ surgery without any success whatsoever.

There was simply no appetite for a doctors’ surgery to be constructed as envisaged by the NDP. This is to the considerable disappointment of SMPC.

The details above of steps taken by SMPC to engage with its community and the references to the resolutions in September 2023 and July 2024 are repeated here.

Is the ICB now (suddenly) saying that it will fund a new doctors’ surgery for the village?

Call-In

Cllr Carter is an SMPC councillor as well as a WBC one. He will therefore be aware of the review process adopted by SMPC (in part reliance upon advice from WBC) as detailed in the report to the SMPC meeting in September 2023 that is annexed to the Statement.

SMPC’s position is that, to the contrary of the statement in the call-in, there has been a review of that part of the NDP referred to in the third bullet of SDB1 (ie in relation to the Reserved Land), in accordance with SDB1.

26/00119/HOUSE: 16 Groves Lea Mortimer Reading RG7 3SR

Garage conversion and single storey rear extension.

SMPC Comments: Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council considered the plans for this application at its Planning & Highways Committee meeting on 19 February 2026 under agenda item 25/187 and had no objections.

25/02396/HOUSE: 57 The Avenue Mortimer Common Reading RG7 3 QU

Part two storey and single storey rear extension, garage conversion with first floor extension over, front dormers, new porch and extension to main roof.

#Reconsultation due to amended Proposed Elevations and Floor Plans.

SMPC Comments: Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council considered the plans for this application at its Planning & Highways Committee meeting on 19 February 2026 under agenda item 25/187 and had no objections.

25/02419/HOUSE: Nenzing Sweetzers Piece Mortimer Reading RG7 3UX

Proposed 2 storey rear and side extensions and alterations.

#Reconsultation due to additional drawings and amended drawings.

SMPC Comments: Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council considered the plans for this application at its Planning & Highways Committee meeting on 19 February 2026 under agenda item 25/187 and had no objections.

25/188 Schedule of Planning Applications to note

None to note.

25/189 Planning Applications for Future Consideration

To note any further new application, which will become agenda items in due course:

26/00163/HOUSE: The Kestrel Ravensworth Road Mortimer West End Reading RG7 3UD

Rear extension and internal alterations.

26/00153/FUL: Latham Cottage The Street Mortimer Common Reading RG7 3RD

Demolition of a fire-damaged dwelling and its replacement with a like-for-like single residential dwelling at Latham Cottage, The Avenue, Mortimer RG7 3RD.

25/190 Items for information only

a Decisions received from West Berkshire Council

25/02530/COND: Windmill Court Windmill Road Mortimer Common Reading RG7 3RL

Approval of details reserved by Conditions (7) CMS, (13) CEMP and (14) LEMP of planning permission 23/01859/FULMAJ: Demolition of Windmill Court and the erection of 24no. dwellings, car parking, landscaping and other associated works.

REFUSED – 26 January 2026

25/02867/NONMAT: Land South Of Tower Gardens The Street Mortimer Common Reading

Non material amendment to approved 22/01422/RESMAJ - Amendment -The conversion of Non-Material Amendment to approved application 22/01422/RESMAJ (Approval of reserved matters following Outline Permission 19/00981/OUTMAJ [Section 73: Variation of condition 6-approved plans of approved application 17/03004/OUTMAJ: This outline application comprises two parts: Part a) The erection of 110 dwellings including affordable housing, public open space and associated landscaping with all matters reserved other than access and layout; Part b) The erection of a 3FE Infant School and 900sqm GP surgery (Use Class D1) with shared parking area with all matters reserved other than access.] Matters seeking consent: Appearance, Landscaping and Scale). Amendments to Plots 51-58 and erection of a short section of low walling upon which the name of the develop lent will be shown

APPROVED – 30 January 2026

Erect a single storey garden room.

APPROVED – 10 February 2026

SMPC Comments: Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council considered the plans for this application at its Planning & Highways Committee meeting on 29 January 2026 under agenda item 25/172 and had no objections, but wanted a condition added that the garden room is solely used for its intended purpose as described in the application and linked to the property

25/191 Minor Matters

Cllr Bridgman reported that he and Cllr Todd would be attending a meeting hosted by the WBC Planning Team regarding the recently announced Call for Sites. Attendance is limited to two councillors

Cllr Hill reported that St John's house does not appear to be a grade 2 listed house. Cllr Hill will check with the WBC Conservation team.

25/192 Communications

Cllr. Bridgman reported he is preparing articles regarding the Basingstoke & Deane 350 houses for the next news Bulletin, and that the Neighbourhood Plan and the reserved land were also on the list for articles.

25/193 Future Agenda Items

St Johns Road entrance issue relating to a condition to upgrade and maintain the unadopted and unmetalled road from the Summerlug Footpath to its junction with West End Road.

Part II (if needed)

25/194 Exclusion of Public and Press

To pass a resolution under s.1(2), Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the item to be discussed.

Not needed.

Close

The meeting closed at 20:58