

**STRATFIELD
MORTIMER**
PARISH COUNCIL



Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan



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PART 1 - BACKGROUND

Foreword

In 2013, West Berkshire Council designated the parish of Stratfield Mortimer as the 'Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area' for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. After a huge amount of work by a Steering Group put together for the task, a draft NDP was submitted to WBC and, following a formal public consultation and an independent examination, WBC voted that the Plan proceed to referendum.

In June 2017 the parish electorate voted to adopt the NDP (by 1,375 votes to 172).

The NDP was linked to what was then the West Berkshire Local Plan, and was due to run to 2026. So, in 2021, a new Steering Group was appointed to draft a new Neighbourhood Plan to take over from the NDP, and this document is the product of that effort.

As before, this Plan is due to run alongside the latest WBC Local Plan (adopted in June 2025) and will thus run to 2041, so the Parish will continue to have a set of local planning policies to shape any development.

Importantly, and unlike the NDP, we are not being required by WBC to take any new housing. However, changes in national planning policy have had an impact and are reflected in the text. Further, WBC announced in June 2026 that preparation of a new West Berkshire Local Plan was commencing – the Parish Council is keeping a close eye on that process.

This Neighbourhood Plan is an exceedingly important document and, whilst there are acknowledgements below, I want to personally thank everyone who has contributed to getting this document into a state ready for publication – another huge effort by a small band of councillors and local residents.

Finally, I want to echo Cllr Mike Dennett's (the then Parish Council Chairman) introduction to the NDP - *"without this plan we would, I am sure, be a much poorer community"*.



Graham Bridgman

Chairman, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council



Acknowledgements

The preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan has been supported by many individuals and organisations who have contributed their time, expertise, and local knowledge. The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who has played a role in shaping and supporting the Plan, whether through formal involvement, consultation, professional advice, or community participation.

The following acknowledgements recognise those who have made a significant contribution to the process. It is offered with appreciation and respect, noting that the collaborative nature of the work means not every contribution may be individually named. Collectively, these efforts have helped to guide the future development of Mortimer in a positive, locally led, and forward-looking way.

- The Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group: Joanne Emberson-Wines (Chair), Graham Bridgman (SMPC Councillor), Tennant Barber, Bob Coe, Neil Kiley, Doug Overett, and Jayne Todd (SMPC Councillor), who have all so generously given of their time to make it possible to develop this Plan (sadly, just before this document was published, Neil lost his battle with a brain tumour, and the steering group lost a friend and colleague);
- The other volunteers who gave their time to the Steering Group: Nick Carter, Amanda Marsden, Danusia Morsley, Sabina Netherclift and Pat Wingfield;
- Sallyann Taylor, the Parish Council's Deputy Clerk and the Steering Group's patient and irreplaceable Administrator and Secretary, and Danielle Davis, the Parish Council's Clerk who, along with Sallyann, kept the Steering Group on the straight and narrow;
- Ana Hernandez, the Secretary to the Steering Group up to September 2024;
- Clare Stafford, for reviewing policies, prior to public consultation events;
- Mike Dennett, for his recommendations and report on the 'Sewage Farm' resilience;
- Stewart Child and Dr Stephen Burt, for their work on and report 'Design Rainfall Amounts';
- AECOM: Jimmy Lu, Lavenya Parthasarathy and Stephanie Brewer;
- Bell Cornwell: Nick Cobbold and Stephanie Baker;
- Bluestone Planning: Sharon de Bru;
- West Berkshire Council: Laila Bassett, who provided invaluable guidance on the conduct of the NP, planning matters and review of the draft policies;
- Mary Auckland MA MRCSLT ARPS: for many of the photographs;
- Paul Carless, Megan Barker, Clare Darbyshire and Sebastian Minto: for photographs that were submitted as part of the Parish Council 2026 Photography Competition;
- ...and all those in the community who took the time to come to public events, engage in the process and answer the questionnaires.

Introduction

The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan

In 2007, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (“**SMPC**”) published the Stratfield Mortimer Village Design Statement (“**SMVDS**”), founded on a detailed understanding of the village’s landscape setting, its shape and grain, and the style and nature of its buildings. The SMVDS described the distinctive surroundings and character of the area, with clear guidance that all new developments were to follow to be successfully accommodated into the Parish.

On 16 December 2013 West Berkshire District Council, generally known as West Berkshire Council (“**WBC**”), designated the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The plan area covers the Parish of Stratfield Mortimer and lies solely within the West Berkshire Local Planning Authority Area.

On 22 June 2017, pursuant to s38A(9), Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Regulation 19, Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), and following a positive referendum result (1,375 out of 1,547 [88.8%] of those who voted were in favour of the plan), WBC made the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (“**SMNDP**”).

This Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 together require that all planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The relevant Development Plan for WBC is the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023 to 2041¹ (“**LPR**”). This Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan (“**SMNP**”) has been prepared in general conformity with the LPR’s strategic policies by the SMPC Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (“**NPSG**”).

This SMNP sits alongside the LPR as part of the Development Plan and has equal status in decision making. Where SMNP policies are more onerous than the requirements of the LPR, these requirements shall be given full weight in the decision-making process.

This SMNP also has regard for national planning policy and guidance, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (“**NPPF**”).

The National Planning Policy Framework

This SMNP was drafted taking into account the NPPF published in December 2024 but, shortly before it was ready to be presented to SMPC for consideration, the Government published its new NPPF in August 2026², including at Annex A (Implementation): *“Neighbourhood plans that have been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15, on or before, the date of publication of this Framework should be prepared in accordance with the Framework published in December 2024. Any neighbourhood plans that have not been*

¹ <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/local-plan-review>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a8334c03bd75b81e2329ac4/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

submitted must comply with this Framework. For neighbourhood plans that have already been submitted, the qualifying body may choose to withdraw the plan and update it to take account of this Framework”.

The elements of the NPPF that directly relate to neighbourhood plans are:

PM5: Neighbourhood plans

- 1 Neighbourhood plans allow local communities to plan positively for their areas by identifying and addressing community priorities that can be met or supported through the planning system. They should do this by:*
 - a Allocating land to meet the development needs of their designated area, where it is appropriate to do so; and*
 - b Setting out policies which address particular local issues. These should relate to site specific matters or, where appropriate, may cover wider issues such as the provision of infrastructure and community facilities, regeneration opportunities, design requirements (including design codes), local environmental improvements and the conservation of local heritage assets.*
- 2 The contents of a neighbourhood plan should not result in less development than specified in other parts of the development plan which cover the same area.*

PM6: General principles for plan-making

- 1 All plan-makers should, in preparing plans:*
 - ...*
 - c Not include policies which duplicate, substantively restate or are inconsistent with the content of national decision-making policies, unless directed by other policies in this Framework;*

PM17: Examining neighbourhood plans

- 1 Neighbourhood plans must meet certain ‘basic conditions’ and other legal requirements before they can come into force. These are tested through an independent examination before the neighbourhood plan may proceed to referendum.*
- 2 The basic conditions include consideration of whether, having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State (which includes policy PM6(1)(c) in this Framework that development plans should not include policies which duplicate, substantively restate or are inconsistent with the content of national policies for decision-making), it is appropriate for the neighbourhood plan to be ‘made’.*

S6: Neighbourhood plans and the presumption

- 1 For development proposals involving the provision of housing, the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects where a proposal would conflict with a neighbourhood plan, provided the following apply:*
 - a The neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and*
 - b The neighbourhood plan contains allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see policy HO2).*

HO2: Setting requirement figures for homes

...

- 5 *In the case of local plans, a housing requirement figure should also be set for designated neighbourhood plan areas, unless it is impractical to do so (because a neighbourhood planning area has been designated at a late stage in the local plan preparation process, or after the plan has been adopted, or in instances where the local plan is out of date; in which case the local planning authority should provide an indicative figure instead). This requirement figure should take into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority. Local planning authorities should avoid setting housing requirement figures for neighbourhood planning areas at nil other than where:*
 - a *The local plan already meets or exceeds the housing need figure for the neighbourhood planning area; or*
 - b *The neighbourhood planning area has a clear and well evidenced need for no additional housing; or*
 - c *The constraints within the neighbourhood planning area are so substantial as to preclude any additional housing of any kind from coming forward.*

HC2: Local Green Space

- 1 *Local and neighbourhood plans may designate land as Local Green Space where this would safeguard green areas of particular value to the local community. Local Green Space should be limited to situations where the land concerned is:*
 - a *In close proximity to the community it serves;*
 - b *Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
 - c *Local in character and not an extensive tract of land.*
- 2 *Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and the provision of sufficient land for homes, jobs and other needs. Local Green Space should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*

Maps and Plans

Many aspects of this SMNP relate to maps or plans of one kind or another (the Neighbourhood Area, the parish settlement boundary, flood zones, existing and proposed Local Green Spaces, maps and plans within the AECOM Design Guidance and Codes document ("DGC"), etc).

Many of these are either contained within this SMNP and/or are within the Evidence Base.

Some of them can also be found, together with others, in the WBC online map by selecting the appropriate layer³.

Evidence Base

This SMNP is supported by an **Evidence Base** containing various supporting reports and evidence for the conclusions set out in the policies below, some elements of which are referenced in the policies. All items within the Evidence Base can be found at <https://np.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/documents>:

- The Stratfield Mortimer Village Design Statement (2007) (SMVDS);
- The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017) (SMNDP);
- AECOM Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Assessment (March 2025) (“HNA”);
- AECOM Design Guidance and Codes (May 2025) (DGC);
- Maps and plans (listed in the Evidence Base);
- Prolonged day darkness and extreme rainfall in Berkshire, 20 July 2007 (Burt, December 2007);
- Mortimer NDP, Surface Water Risk Management, notes on selection of design rainfall amounts;
- Consultations (November 2022 and October 2025) and analysis of responses.

2025 Consultation and issues raised

Public consultations were held in November 2022 and October 2025 to assist the preparation of this SMNP, as detailed in the Evidence Base.

The consultation held in October 2025 produced a list of potential community actions and/or projects, some of which are included in the policies below (eg green space protection, biodiversity and community energy). Many of the issues raised were however outside the scope of this SMNP but have been forwarded to SMPC for consideration.

The matters referred to fell into the following broad topics:

- Mortimer Station car park expansion;
- School parking and drop-off improvements;
- Traffic calming and road safety measures;
- Community Energy Plan and community-owned energy scheme;
- New allotments;
- Biodiversity enhancement programme;
- Green space protection and enhancement projects;
- Improved play and recreation facilities;

³ <https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap/>

- Infrastructure monitoring and engagement with utility providers;
- Health service capacity improvements.

Interpretation

It is important that this SMNP is read and interpreted as a whole - all SMNP policies should be viewed together and not in isolation in the preparation and consideration of planning applications.

Development proposals will be judged against all relevant policies. All Development Plan policies will be taken into account in determining planning applications, along with other material considerations in a proportionate manner.

Please note that the policies in this SMNP do not list, or cross-refer to, all other policies that may be relevant.

Conformance with Neighbourhood Plan Policies and Guidance

Development proposals should demonstrate, through proportionate supporting information and illustrative material, how the policies, principles and design guidance of this Neighbourhood Plan have been addressed.

Where a proposal departs from the relevant policies or design principles, the proposal should be accompanied by a clear and reasoned justification of the material considerations which indicate a departure from the policies.

The Vision

- The Parish identifies and adopts appropriate emerging opportunities and technology to be more sustainable, environmentally aware and responsive to climate change, placing this at the heart of this Neighbourhood Plan.
- To continually seek to develop the housing stock that aims to makes it possible for local people to live the whole of their lives in the parish if they so wish.
- Embracing inevitable change in a positive and beneficial way, the Parish will:
 - ensure the continuing vitality and viability of Mortimer’s commercial centre, concentrating developments into a defined area which enables them to be accessed withing walking distance of each other;
 - have services and facilities appropriate for a modern rural and thriving community;
 - provide and enhance local employment opportunities;
 - retain its rural character, ethos and setting with the minimum of intrusion on the existing green and agricultural space.
- To support improved and safer:
 - pedestrian and cycle connections throughout the village, including to the schools and station;
 - traffic management and parking.
- To support improved public transport.
- The Parish has a measurable continuing improvement in both its natural and street environment delivered though the design codes.

Strategy

To deliver the Vision, the following strategies will be adopted:

- To identify and support opportunities to provide a range of starter homes (affordable and market rates), homes for rent (affordable and market rates), and smaller homes/bungalows for older people to downsize, made available to members of the local community.
- To seek out and implement realistic, for the Parish, best-practice zero carbon Community energy generation and climate change mitigation.
- To have Mortimer-centred design guides and codes that deliver the aspirations of the community expressed in this Neighbourhood Plan.
- To aim for long-term investment in which the values that matter to community are safeguarded.
- To build on local greening initiatives to help recover the loss of natural environment and enhance biodiversity.

The Village of Mortimer

Introduction

Stratfield Mortimer is a parish with a long and distinctive history, shaped by its landscape, rural setting, and the people who have lived and worked here over many centuries. Evidence of settlement dates back to prehistoric times, including Bronze Age barrows, with later Roman activity and a recorded presence in the Domesday Book of 1086. For much of its history, Mortimer developed as an agricultural community centred on the fertile land around the Foudry Brook and the shared spaces that continue to support a vibrant multigenerational community today.



The enclosure of Mortimer Common in the early nineteenth century, the arrival of the railway in the Victorian era, and gradual twentieth-century housing growth all contributed to the evolution of the village. These layers of history are reflected in Mortimer's built form, green spaces, and network of footpaths, all highly valued by residents.

In 2026, Stratfield Mortimer continues to function as a designated Rural Service Centre within the Settlement Hierarchy of the LPR, providing important facilities for residents and neighbouring communities. Its accessibility brings development pressures typical of Thames Valley villages, making it essential to manage change carefully while safeguarding Mortimer's rural character and strong sense of identity.

This Neighbourhood Plan provides a locally-led framework to guide development to 2041, ensuring that growth is positive, proportionate, and sensitive to the parish's history, landscape, and community life.

Location and Setting

Stratfield Mortimer lies at the eastern edge of West Berkshire, bordered by Hampshire and Wokingham. Surrounded by farmland, woodland and common land, the parish retains a strong rural setting and clear separation from neighbouring settlements — a defining characteristic of its identity.

Rail connections to Reading and Basingstoke and road access to wider employment areas support the village's sustainability but also bring development pressures. As a Rural Service Centre, Mortimer provides schools, healthcare, shops, community buildings, and recreational spaces that serve both residents and surrounding villages.

Protecting the landscape setting, maintaining well-defined village edges, and ensuring development responds positively to its surroundings are central considerations throughout this SMNP.

Historical Development

Human activity in Mortimer dates back to prehistoric times, most notably the Bronze Age barrow cemetery at Holden's Firs. Roman activity followed, and by the medieval period Mortimer was an established rural community recorded in the Domesday Book.

Agriculture shaped the parish for centuries, with settlement patterns linked to farming, woodland management and the commons. Schools and shared community spaces emerged as enduring focal points, supporting the multigenerational character that continues today.

The enclosure of Mortimer Common in 1802 marked a significant change, with conifer planting shaping the wooded landscape still visible to the north and west. The Fairground — land historically set aside for communal use — remains one of Mortimer's most valued open spaces.

Residential development expanded from the late nineteenth century, forming a recognisable historic core around Windmill Road, King Street, Victoria Road, West End Road, St John's Road and St Mary's Road. The arrival of the railway strengthened connections to Reading, Basingstoke, and London, supporting gradual but controlled growth.

Twentieth-century development included the Stephens Road and Stephens Firs estates, Croft Road, the Crescent, College Piece, Groves Lea, Strawberry Fields, and later Tower House Farm. Throughout this growth, Mortimer retained its rural setting, village edges, and strong identity.

In 2026 Mortimer is home to over 4,000 residents, with a wide range of services and an active, vibrant multigenerational community supported by clubs, societies, and regular events. Its historic core, green spaces, and relationship with the countryside remain fundamental to its character.

Current Situation

Mortimer remains predominantly rural, with development concentrated in the northwestern part of the parish and a clear distinction between village and countryside. The wider parish is characterised by farmland, woodland, common land, and scattered rural dwellings, contributing to low overall population density.



Overall, Mortimer in 2026 remains a clearly defined rural village with strong edges, valued landscapes, good connectivity, and a thriving multigenerational community identity.

An extract from Mortimer Through the Ages © Mortimer Local History Group, 1994

Mortimer's character in photographs



Our buildings and green space, working together

Mortimer's many looks, with one cohesive village character

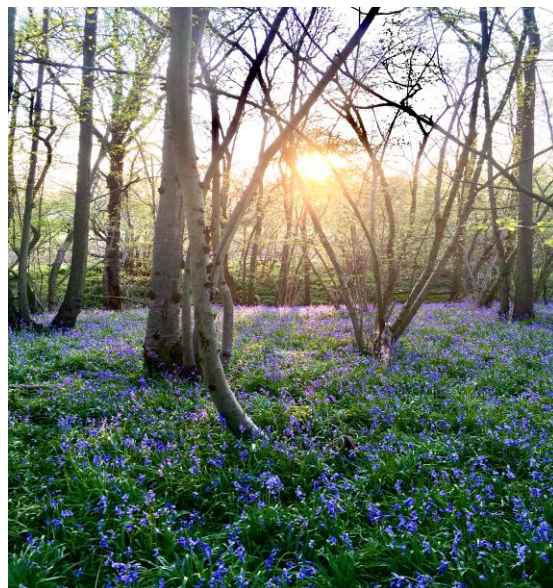
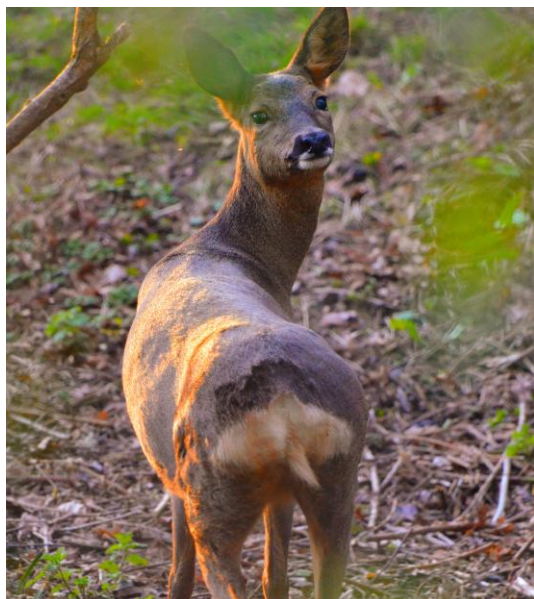




Mortimer's character is shaped by variety rather than uniformity. Different building ages, materials, plot patterns, roof forms and architectural details reflect the parish's historic growth and rural identity.

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect this local character by ensuring development responds positively to its setting, maintains appropriate scale and frontage rhythm, and contributes to soft village edges, landscape connection and cohesive sense of place.

Some of the wonderful views around the Parish of Stratfield Mortimer, taken as part of the photographic competition run by the Parish Council in 2026



Consultation Process

Community Engagement

Community engagement has been central to the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan. From the outset, the objective has been to ensure that local people have meaningful opportunities to influence how the parish develops and that the Plan reflects the priorities, concerns and aspirations of those who live and work in Stratfield Mortimer.

Engagement has taken place over an extended period and has been designed to reach as wide a cross-section of the community as possible. This has included a combination of face-to-face, written, and digital methods to encourage participation and informed feedback.

Engagement has included:

- Public meetings, exhibitions, and workshops held at key stages of plan preparation;
- Parish-wide questionnaires distributed to households and businesses;
- Online consultation and opportunities to submit comments digitally;
- Targeted discussions with local schools, healthcare providers, businesses, landowners, and community groups;
- Ongoing liaison with West Berkshire Council officers and relevant statutory bodies;
- Regular updates through parish publications, noticeboards, and websites.

This inclusive and transparent approach has helped to build a strong evidence base and has ensured that policies are informed by local knowledge as well as professional advice. Feedback from the community, particularly through questionnaire responses and public events, has played a key role in shaping the Vision, Strategy, and detailed policies of this Plan.

The community engagement process has remained open throughout, with opportunities provided for residents to comment on emerging ideas and draft policies. This ongoing dialogue has helped to build understanding, trust, and support for the Plan, ensuring that it represents a genuinely community-led framework for guiding the future development of Mortimer.

Key Events

Please see the Evidence Base for some of the detailed information below (consultation responses, etc).

Month	Event
July 2021	SMPC created the NPSG at its Full Council meeting.
Autumn 2021	Parish Council newsletter (distributed to all parish households) including a two-page article "Neighbourhood Plan Refresh".
March 2022	Bluestone Planning appointed to gather baseline evidence, engage with community and scope content of SMNP.

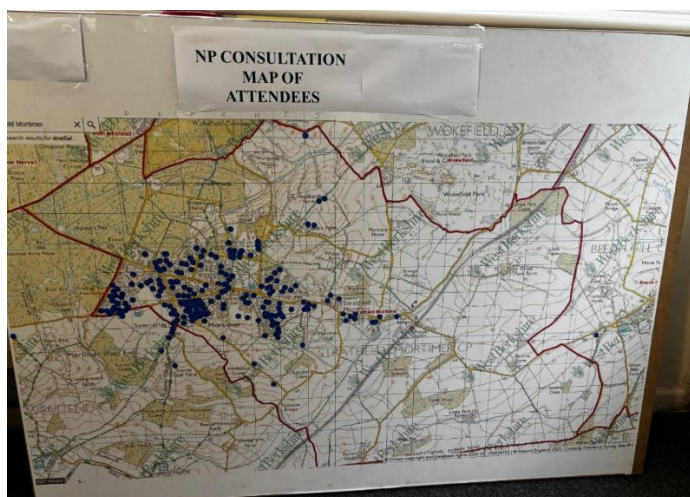
April 2022	Presentation by Chairman of NPSG to Annual Parish Meeting regarding SMNP progress and appointment of Bluestone.
June 2022	SMNP stand at HM Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebration on The Fairground.
July 2022	A survey was sent out to all parish households to understand community needs and ideas.
September 2022	Analysis of survey results, key themes, etc. 302 questionnaires completed with 2,313 free form comments.
November 2022	Three public drop-in events and exhibition at St John's Hall, Mortimer, outlining seven themes for discussion - Climate Change, Natural Environment, Landscape and Streetscape, Community Services, Homes and Housing, Employment, and Highways and Transport. Attendees asked to give thoughts on each theme around what an NP policy on the subject might look like. Questionnaire issued.
December 2022	Parish Council newsletter including a leaflet identifying the seven key SMNP themes, referencing an analysis of the drop-in events comments received set out on the SMNP website, and seeking comments on them.
February 2023	Analysis of outcome from November 2022 consultation events and questionnaire (101 responses analysed).
April 2023	Presentation by Chairman of NPSG to Annual Parish Meeting regarding SMNP progress, including reflections on consultation in November 2022.
Spring 2023	Parish Council newsletter including article with reflections on the drop-in events and comments received subsequently.
Summer 2023	Parish Council newsletter including article giving an update on SMNP progress.
Autumn 2023	Parish Council newsletter including article giving an update on SMNP progress, policy drafting, etc.
April 2024	Latest information about SMNP displayed at Annual Parish Meeting.
Spring 2024	Parish Council newsletter including article giving an update on SMNP progress and its relationship with the LPR.
July 2024	AECOM appointed to provide consultancy support in developing the Design Guidance and Codes, the Housing Needs Assessment and an Evidence-Based Policy Development report.
Summer 2024	Parish Council newsletter including article giving an update on SMNP progress and appointment of AECOM.
April 2025	Presentation by Chairman of NPSG and steering group member to Annual Parish Meeting regarding SMNP progress.
Spring 2025	Parish Council newsletter including article giving an update on SMNP progress.
Summer 2025	Parish Council newsletter including article giving an update on SMNP progress.
October 2025	Five public drop-in consultation events held over a three-week period at St John's School, Mortimer. Key aspects of draft policies displayed and comments gathered. The events were

	attended in total by over 280 households (see Where Do You Live Pin Map in the Evidence Base) and 783 feedback cards were returned.
December 2025	Bell Cornwell appointed to provide advice on policy development, on meeting the 'basic conditions' and support through Regulation 14.
April 2026	Presentation by NPSG member to Annual Parish Meeting regarding SMNP progress and anticipated Regulation 14 process.
August 2026	Final draft SMNP issued by NPSG.
September 2026	SMPC accepted the Pre Submission Plan and agreed for it to go forward for consideration.
TBC	Regulation 14 consultation.
TBC	Amendments to draft SMNP arising from Regulation 14.
TBC	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council accepted the Plan and agreed for it to be submitted to WBC.

Communications

Open, transparent, and inclusive communication has been central to the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan and remains a core commitment going forward.

Meetings of the Steering Group were held in public, and minutes were made available so that residents could follow progress and understand how decisions were being shaped. Regular updates were provided to the Parish Council, with key milestones discussed openly and proposals formally considered as they evolved.






NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

QUESTIONNAIRE DROP OFF BOX

PLEASE POST YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE HERE

IF YOU NEED MORE QUESTIONNAIRES FOR YOUR PROPERTY

> EMAIL: NEWNP@STRATFIELD-MORTIMER.GOV.UK
 OR
 > TELEPHONE: 0118 933 1955

Progress on the Plan was shared widely using a mix of traditional and digital channels to reach as many people as possible. Updates appeared in the parish newsletter, on local noticeboards, and through materials displayed in well-used community spaces. Alongside this, the Parish Council and NP websites, together with community social media channels, were used to provide timely information, promote events, and explain next steps in a clear and accessible way.



Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan

Newsletter June 2022

How can we improve our Parish?

What has happened to date?

- ▶ The Neighbourhood Plan for Stratfield Mortimer was adopted in June 2017. The key focus of the plan was the delivery of 110 new houses, which is now entering Phase 2 of development.
- ▶ You may be aware that the local planning authority, West Berkshire Council, are now preparing a Local Plan which extends to 2037 and will set out planning policies and priorities for the area. As the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan covers the time period from 2017 to 2026, an updated Neighbourhood Plan is needed to align with West Berkshire's Local Plan.
- ▶ Since the adoption of the existing Neighbourhood Plan, priorities for the Parish Council have shifted and there is a greater focus on climate change and sustainable development.
- ▶ As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) are seeking input and opinions from the local community.
- ▶ The NPSG are at a stage in which to begin a process of community engagement and consultation, with a view to establish the community's core aspirations for development. This will dictate the direction of travel of the new Neighbourhood Plan.

What will happen next?

- ▶ The next steps of the process are underway and involve establishing the community's core aspirations, key themes and issues related to future development.
- ▶ This evidence base will be used to draw up a draft vision and objectives for the future of Stratfield Mortimer. This will then be used to shape the revised Neighbourhood Plan.
- ▶ Please take a look at how to get involved and the potential key themes we have initially suggested as a starting point.

Please get in touch and let us have your thoughts via any of the methods below:

Web: www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/

email: NewNP@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Write to us at
Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council
27, Victoria Road
Mortimer
Reading RG7 3SH

We will also be setting up further details on the parish website as well as information on Facebook and Instagram.

We have appointed independent consultants Bluestone Planning LLP to assist with organising public engagement and ensuring that we comply with Neighbourhood Planning regulations.

Residents were encouraged throughout to ask questions, share views, and contribute ideas, whether in person, online, or in writing. This two-way approach helped ensure that the Plan reflects local priorities while remaining responsive, understandable, and relevant to the whole community.

The continued use of clear, accessible, and inclusive communication will support the successful delivery, monitoring, and future review of the Neighbourhood Plan, helping to maintain trust, encourage participation, and keep the community informed as the Plan is implemented.

The results of the exhibitions and the questionnaire were published on the NP website and in paper form in the local library. Developing draft policies were published on the NP website for comment.

SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT analysis summarises the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified through community consultation and evidence review. It highlights the main issues the Neighbourhood Plan must address and has been used to inform the Plan's policies. Further explanation can be found in the Evidence Base.

Strengths • Strong village identity and sense of community • Clear separation between village and countryside • Valued green spaces, commons and landscape setting • Rich historic character, settlement pattern and heritage assets • Range of local services and facilities for a parish of its size • Good rail and road connectivity supporting access to employment • Well-used footpaths and public rights of way • High levels of community engagement and civic involvement • Established Neighbourhood Development Plan providing a locally driven planning framework	Weaknesses • Limited public transport beyond rail services • Distance between parts of the village and the railway station • Parking pressure near the station, village centre and schools • Capacity constraints for SEND places, healthcare, drainage and wastewater infrastructure • Flooding and surface water management issues in parts of the parish • Housing affordability challenges, particularly for younger people • Limited smaller and downsizing homes • Perceived gaps in walking and cycling connectivity
Opportunities • Use the Neighbourhood Plan to shape the scale, location and quality of growth • Deliver a more balanced housing mix focused on local need • Improve walking, cycling and sustainable transport links • Enhance biodiversity, green infrastructure and environmental resilience • Secure infrastructure improvements alongside development • Strengthen the village centre and support local services	Threats • Development pressure arising from Mortimer's accessibility and Thames Valley location • Risk of overdevelopment and loss of village identity • Gradual urbanisation, including loss of dark skies, green space and rural character • Infrastructure failing to keep pace with growth • National planning policy changes reducing local influence • Speculative development outside allocated sites • Increasing house prices further limiting affordability for local residents

PART 2 – POLICIES

Design Guides and Codes Policies

Objectives

High-quality design and layout demonstrating an appreciation and understanding of vernacular and local character, including existing buildings, landscape and local architectural precedents which:

- respects the local character of Stratfield Mortimer; and
- maintains the rural nature and feel of the village and parish.

Policies

DC1 - General

- 1 Developments will be supported where they are in accordance with the Design Principles (DC2), the Physical Rural Design Characteristics (DC3) and the DGC.
- 2 Developments should also be informed by the nature, characteristics and design recommendation set out in the SMVDS.
- 3 It is acknowledged that there may be circumstances where strict adherence to the Design Principles, Rural Physical Design Characteristics and the DGC is not practical or appropriate. In such instances, development proposals should provide clear justification for any departure, demonstrating that the scheme continues to deliver high-quality design.

DC2 - Design Principles

- 1 The rural character of the village shall be retained and supported by developments drawing on the combination of the recognisable physical characteristics (set out in DC3) which give a village its rural character and which are expected to inform the design of all developments.
- 2 Any proposed development (or alteration to an existing dwelling) will be supported where it is in accordance with the following criteria:
 - 2.1 the proposal is in keeping with the mass and character of the surrounding properties and street scene;
 - 2.2 all developments are of no more than two (2) storeys in height;
 - 2.3 any third-floor accommodation proposed shall:
 - 2.3.1 be fully enclosed in the roof space;
 - 2.3.2 accord with the roof heights and predominant character of adjacent properties;

- 2.4 there are reduced densities towards and along rural edges to create a gradual transition towards the countryside matching the densities of the immediate adjacent area and properties;
- 2.5 the 'dark sky' environment of the parish is maintained.
- 3 In all cases the development shall:
 - 3.1 respond positively to climate change effects with an emphasis on reduction of (a) surface water flood risk, and (b) high temperature hot spots;
 - 3.2 create safe, attractive, green and accessible public and private spaces;
 - 3.3 deliver attractive shared road spaces avoiding on-street and in-front of building car parking;
 - 3.4 provide sustainable access to local services;
 - 3.5 integrate green infrastructure;
 - 3.6 make provision to allow the installation of high-performance digital infrastructure within properties (residential and commercial), taking into account then current technologies.
- 4 The subdivision of dwellings into two or more units, or the change of use of dwellings to houses in multiple occupation, will only be supported where:
 - 4.1 all resultant properties:
 - 4.1.1 benefit from adequate and private parking and amenity space;
 - 4.1.2 satisfy the Nationally Described Space Standards⁴;
 - 4.1.3 result in no harmful impact on residential amenity to adjacent properties;
 - 4.2 there will be no harmful effect on the character of the area from either the conversion of the building or any external changes required.

DC3 - Physical Rural Design Characteristics

The recognisable physical characteristics of Mortimer's rural character shall inform the design of all developments as follows.

- 1 Any edge of development proposals shall read as a place within countryside, not a suburb, with:
 - 1.1 soft edges rather than hard urban boundaries;
 - 1.2 fields, hedgerows, and tree belts directly backing onto the village edge;
 - 1.3 gaps between built areas that show views out to countryside; and
 - 1.4 avoiding continuous new development that extends the built-up line into open countryside.

- 2 The Building Grain and Plot Pattern should reflect historical layering and organic growth, with:
 - 2.1 small-scale, irregular plot widths, not uniform estate spacing;
 - 2.2 varied building types rather than one large phase of identical homes;
 - 2.3 short terraces, or semi-detached housing included - not large blocks of detached houses in cul-de-sacs.
- 3 The Character of Streets and Roads should feel intimate, walkable, and shaped by soft landscaping wherever possible with:
 - 3.1 informal, winding alignments;
 - 3.2 frontages set-back to the street in core areas, with deeper setbacks and greenery at the edges;
 - 3.3 no street lighting except where necessary for safety.
- 4 The Landscape Structure should reflect that green structure defines the settlement more than buildings do, with:
 - 4.1 hedgerows rather than fencing along lanes and field boundaries;
 - 4.2 mature trees identified by The Royal Botanic Gardens or The Royal Horticultural Society as suitable for anticipated climate change;
 - 4.3 gardens merging into open fields at the edge;
 - 4.4 visible separation between settlements (no coalescence).
- 5 The Built Form and Architecture should reinforce familiarity and local identity, with:
 - 5.1 simple building forms (rectangular plans, pitched roofs);
 - 5.2 local materials;
 - 5.3 chimneys, porches, gables but not over-designed features.
- 6 The Rhythm of Frontages should give 'Breathing Spaces' and prevent the village reading as a town, with:
 - 6.1 no continuous urban frontages;
 - 6.2 areas of enclosure balanced with separation and visual gaps.
- 7 The Views and Vistas should retain the rural landscape as visually perceptible from within the village, and:
 - 7.1 maintain key outward views to countryside, church towers, farms, and ridges;
 - 7.2 avoid blocking mid to long range views with perimeter fences or estate perimeter roads.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

Supporting Text

Whilst meeting the housing needs of the parish, or as required from time to time by WBC, the purpose of the policies is to ensure developments retain the essential rural nature and character of the parish.

The responses to the consultations both for the SMNDP and for this SMNP demonstrate strong support for the objectives of this policy:

- residents expressed a keen desire to maintain:
 - the separation and individuality of the village, and were anxious to contain building and development within the existing settlement boundary;
 - the greenfield and rural aspects of the approaches to the village itself, as doing much to establish the character of the community;
 - the rural nature of the village and parish, rejecting urbanisation;
 - the spatial relationship between buildings and landscape, as important for the character and feel of the village;
- the SMVDS at page 18, 'A Community View of The Character and Identity of Stratfield Mortimer', provides the evidence of the residents' view that building density should reduce towards the boundary edge.

To enable this, the set of principles contained in these policies, endorsed by the feedback from the consultations, are the key criteria for development in Stratfield Mortimer. These principles are underpinned by a set of the physical characteristics which together give a village its rural feel. Important is the spatial relationship between buildings and countryside for the character and feel of the village. A hard physical edge with abrupt change from dense building mass to rural greenspace is not typical of rural village communities.

As acknowledged in DC1.3, there will be situations where it is not practical or reasonable to stick rigidly to the detailed guidelines, codes and the principles. Where it is considered necessary to depart from these in a development proposal, the applicant is encouraged to discuss any proposed divergence with SMPC before proceeding with detailed design.

Housing Policies

Objective

To develop the housing stock, the mix of types of homes and tenure, making it possible for people to live the whole of their lives in the parish if they so wish with a focus on the provision of both starter homes and homes for the 55+ demographic.

Policies

HN1 - Types and Mix of Homes

- 1 The types of homes to be provided on a development of greater than 10 or more homes shall be in accord with Table HN1.1 below:

Table HN1.1	
Number of Bedrooms	Indicative Range (%)
1	10-15
2	25-35
3	45-55
4+	0-10

- 1 The dwellings shall consist a mix of detached, semi-detached, terraced, apartments, and a number of bungalows suitable for downsizing, reflecting the character of the surrounding area.
- 2 In determining any departure from the recommended mix, regard will be given to:
 - 2.1 any physical or site factors which limit the mix;
 - 2.2 the location;
 - 2.3 if there is clear evidence for the need for a particular type of dwelling;
 - 2.4 site specific viability.
- 3 It is recognised that the provision of affordable housing (an issue for Mortimer identified in the HNA) is related to higher density developments and types of homes (eg terraces, flats, and 1 and 2 bedroom homes). Thus the need to improve affordability might be in conflict with the Design Codes on density, which in rural areas tend to favour lower density options that blend in with the existing built environment. Resolution of any conflict, should such arise, should be resolved at early stage in discussion between SMPC and the developer.

HN2 – Reservation of Properties for 55+

The designation of dwellings specified and allocated in an application for those 55+ shall be protected in perpetuity, unless marketing evidence demonstrates that such dwellings are no longer attractive to the older demographic.

Supporting Text

The Housing Needs policies are evidenced by the findings and recommendations in the HNA. The HNA sets out that factors affecting the principal housing needs in the parish are that:

- the demand for additional properties being driven by the growth in the 55+ demographic;
- a majority of new properties should be one, two and three bedroom – the demand for these satisfying the anticipated growth in that demographic;
- there is little forecast need for four+ bedroom properties;
- there is a requirement for more affordable homes and those for rent;
- the smaller social and private rented sectors in Mortimer limit the availability of more affordable accommodation.

The responses of the to the questionnaire (June 2022) in Table HP.1 below support the findings in the HNA (nb that respondents could select more than one option).

Table HP.1				
Type	Requirement			
	Market Housing	Affordable for		
		Rent	Shared Ownership	Sale at Discount
1 bed	19.7%	52.1%	35.5%	39.5%
2 bed	52.5%	66.4%	65.3%	58.1%
3 bed	40.2%	41.4%	48.8%	46.8%
4 bed	17.2%	6.4%	8.3%	10.5%
5 bed	3.3%	2.1%	2.5%	3.2%
Flat/Appt	24.6%	40.0%	35.5%	31.5%
House 2 storey	22.1%	32.7%	34.7%	32.3%
Bungalow	55.5%	36.4%	25.6%	34.7%
Other	20.5%	15.0%	18.2%	20.2%

The SMNDP had similar returns from the community consultations.

The Updated Housing Needs Evidence 2022 for West Berkshire⁵ suggests the following mix of housing, broken down by market, affordable ownership and affordable rented, and thus has a broadly similar requirement:

Table 6.19 Suggested Mix of Housing by Size and Tenure

	1-bedroom	2-bedrooms	3-bedrooms	4+-bedrooms
Market	5-10%	40-45%	35-40%	10-15%
Affordable home ownership	20-25%	45-50%	20-25%	5-10%
Affordable housing (rented)	30-35%	35-40%	20-25%	5-10%

Source: Derived from a range of sources

⁵ https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49817/Updated-Housing-Needs-Evidence-July-2022/pdf/West_Berkshire_Housing_Needs_Assessment_Update_July_2022_k470ia88z4lb.pdf?m=1776083980150

Community Energy Policies

Objectives

- 1 To encourage the local community to investigate and develop a community-led renewable energy project providing criteria for assessing renewable and low-carbon energy proposals.
- 2 To establish minimum standards for EV charging power specification for charge points on non-residential and public car parks.

Policies

CE1 – Individual and Community Energy Projects

Proposals for renewable or low-carbon energy schemes will be supported where:

- 1 there is evidence of meaningful community engagement and detail as to how the design has responded positively to local concerns and feedback;
- 2 the scale of a scheme is demonstrated as suitable for the location and appropriate to the parish landscape—typically small-scale commercial schemes up to around 3 MW (no larger than approximately 5 acres), and:
 - 2.1 located on low-grade agricultural land (grades 3b or below) or previously developed land;
 - 2.2 accompanied by a landscape / visual impact assessment, with mitigating actions to resolve substantive concerns;
 - 2.3 includes hedges and soft landscaping around the perimeter providing adequate screening and green corridors for important wildlife habitat;
 - 2.4 without harm to residential amenity by virtue of noise, vibration, overshadowing, smell, reflected sunlight, dust, pollution, traffic, lighting, or unreasonable hours of operation flicker or other harmful emissions;
 - 2.5 the principles of Agrivoltaics informing the design of the scheme to enable continuing crop uses, thus reducing the environmental impact.
- 3 Proposals shall be accompanied by:
 - 3.1 site options and landscape assessments, identifying suitable and available land;
 - 3.2 community consultation reports evidencing local involvement and support.

CE2 - Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging

New non-residential and public car parks developments shall provide EV charging infrastructure to provide a minimum 150 kW unless it is demonstrated as unviable or not feasible within an accompanying justification statement.

Supporting Text

Definition of Community Energy

Community energy is communities having democratic control over their energy future - generating, using, owning and saving energy in their communities (Community Energy England). It includes projects whether wholly owned or delivered in partnership with the private or public sector.

It does not include private individual residential or business schemes.

A 'community' in this context refers to:

- the totality of residents and businesses that reside or trade within the Parish of Stratfield Mortimer, or
- a group of residents or businesses that agree to come together to share a common energy facility.

Evidence and Justification

Consultation demonstrated that 65% of participants in the November 2022 open forum supported a community energy generation scheme.

The definition of Community Energy is set out in The Centre for Sustainable Energy report 'Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency'⁶ (pp 25-37).

EV Charging Context

The Building Regulations Part S⁷ set infrastructure requirements but do not specify power output.

This SMNP establishes minimum power thresholds to ensure practicality for modern electric vehicles.

⁶ <https://www.cse.org.uk/resource/neighbourhood-planning-in-a-climate-emergency/>

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6218c5d38fa8f54911e22263/AD_S.pdf

Climate Change and Resilience Policies

Objectives

- 1 To ensure that developments do not increase flood risk elsewhere; protecting properties adjacent to water courses downstream of development sites, and properties, land and the road network adjacent to the Foudry Brook to the east of the village.
- 2 Through building and landscape design minimise the impact of higher temperatures arising from climate change.

Policies

CCR1 - Surface Water Risk Management

Development proposals shall incorporate surface water risk management measures designed for a 1:100 year storm event plus a 40% climate change allowance, using the rainfall intensity figures in Table CCR1.1 below (1:100 Year Storm Rainfall Intensity) unless updated evidence is agreed with the Lead Local Flood Authority.

Table CCR1.1 - 1:100 Year Storm Rainfall Intensity		
Duration	1:100 year rainfall (mm)	1:100 year rainfall (mm/hr)
Any 15 min	38	151
Any 30 min	55	110
Any 1 hr	64	64
Any 3 hr	105	35
Any 24 hr	140	6
<i>(Time period is any consecutive period)</i>		

CCR2 - Sustainable Drainage Systems

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) on developments shall seek to achieve a minimum 15% reduction below greenfield runoff rates and volumes.

CCR 3 - Overheating and Temperature Resilience

- 1 Development proposals shall demonstrate how they address the risk of overheating informed by:
 - 1.1 the latest Building Regulations Approved Document O⁸;
 - 1.2 the latest Passivhaus principles⁹; and
 - 1.3 design features that reduce excessive summer solar gain, such as overhanging eaves and external louvered shutters.
- 2 Where site characteristics indicate potential urban heat 'hot spots', proposals shall incorporate measures such as:
 - 2.1 green infrastructure and tree planting;
 - 2.2 evapotranspiration cooling;
 - 2.3 airflow corridors aligned with prevailing winds.
- 3 Landscaping schemes shall prioritise native and other species, identified by (a) The Royal Botanic Gardens, using Kew Reach tools to identify the most suitable tree for a site, or (b) The Royal Horticultural Society, as suitable for anticipated climate change.

Supporting Text

Surface Water Risk Management

The NPPF Policy F5.2.b.ii states: *"Where the site would be at risk of surface water flooding only, the proposed layout, design, and mitigation measures would ensure that occupiers and users would remain safe from current and future surface water flood risk for the lifetime of the development without increasing flood risk elsewhere in accordance with policy F7"*.

To satisfy this policy, localised surface water and groundwater issues in Stratfield Mortimer require additional neighbourhood-level provisions. The objective of these policies is to reduce the risk of flooding both within new developments and downstream, particularly as climate change increases the frequency and intensity of rainfall.

This aligns with LPR Policies SP5 and SP6, which require development to adapt to climate change and manage flood risk.

Stratfield Mortimer sits on rising land approximately 45 metres above Stratfield Mortimer Station and the Foudry Brook corridor. Surface water drains eastwards via drainage ditches, ordinary watercourses and highway drainage. Existing infrastructure can become overwhelmed during storm periods of high rainfall and/or high intensity rainfall.

Local evidence highlights specific risks:

- 1 highway drains in The Street have insufficient capacity during intense rainfall;

⁸ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6218c5aad3bf7f4f0b29b624/ADO.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.passivhaustrust.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Passivhaus%20Principles.pdf>

- 2 the eastern end of The Street, near the railway station, is prone to surface water flooding;
- 3 in extreme events, such as July 2007 drainage ditches and sewers were overwhelmed, leading to internal property flooding (*Prolonged day darkness and extreme rainfall in Berkshire, 20 July 2007, Stephen Burt*).

Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Risk Mapping¹⁰ identifies areas in the parish currently at risk and with increased risk beyond 2040. The West Berkshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment¹¹ confirms the importance of managing surface water during 1:30 and 1:100 year storm events.

Flooding in the area is typically caused by:

- 1 storm events in particular those including short-duration, high-intensity rainfall events; and
- 2 rainfall on already saturated ground.

To ensure drainage systems are designed using locally relevant evidence, Policy CCR1 specifies rainfall intensities based on the 1:100 year storm event with a 40% climate change allowance (see Mortimer NDP, Surface Water Risk Management).

Responding to Increased High Temperatures

Future climate projections (UKCP18¹²) indicate that the South East is likely to experience higher average summer temperatures, with a significant increase in prolonged heat events by 2050.

The policies are in response to NPPF Policies CC3 and DP3 requiring developments and planning policies to address overheating.

Policy CCR3 ensures development mitigates overheating risks through (for example but not only):

- 1 building design features to reduce summer solar gain;
- 2 passive design and natural ventilation approaches (including Passivhaus);
- 3 green infrastructure strategies such as tree planting, evapotranspiration cooling and ventilation corridors;
- 4 prioritising native and other species suitable for anticipated climate change.

¹⁰ <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/map>

¹¹ <https://westberks.gov.uk/article/41060/Strategic-Flood-Risk-Assessment-SFRA>

¹² <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp>

Natural Environment Policies

Objectives

- 1 To maintain the 'dark landscape' character of Stratfield Mortimer (Policies NE1 and NE2):
 - limiting public lighting to essential requirements to ensure public safety; and
 - for private and commercial properties, services and facilities, lighting that avoids adverse impacts on residential amenity, landscape character, nighttime environments, wildlife and wildlife corridors.
- 2 To establish which green spaces are designated as Local Green Spaces in accordance with the NPPF (Policy NE3).

Policies

NE1 - Public Street Lighting

- 1 Lighting will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it is required to protect public safety.
- 2 Where street lighting is justified, it shall be designed and installed to:
 - 2.1 the minimum lighting intensity level (candela, lux and lumen) necessary to address any identified safety risk;
 - 2.2 avoid adverse impacts on residential amenity, landscape character, heritage assets, nighttime environments, wildlife and wildlife corridors;
 - 2.3 comply with relevant guidance, including the Institution of Lighting Professionals' Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (GN01)¹³.
- 3 For the purposes of this policy, 'safety' refers to circumstances where the absence of lighting would create a foreseeable risk of harm to road users or pedestrians that cannot reasonably be addressed by other means. This includes, but not limited to:
 - 3.1 locations with a documented history of accidents due to no or low lighting;
 - 3.2 road junctions, crossings, or sections where visibility is critical for vehicle or pedestrian movement;
 - 3.3 areas necessary for emergency access, public transport facilities, or essential services.
- 4 Lighting should be designed and located to the minimum necessary to mitigate these risks, and should avoid unnecessary light spill, energy consumption, and ecological disturbance.
- 5 Where lighting is essential the policy seeks, by design and location, to limit it to the minimum that is necessary to mitigate the identified safety risk, whilst keeping to

¹³ <https://theilp.org.uk/resource/gn01-ilp-guidance-note-1-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021.html>

the forefront the objective of maintain the dark character of the parish. It is expected that planning conditions will be used to secure appropriate mitigation to prevent unnecessary light pollution, for example but not limited to:

- low level lighting for pedestrians;
- limiting the hours of operation through the use of automatic timers, and night-time dimming;
- ensuring that lights angle the beam downwards to a level below that of horizontal;
- using surface types that reduce the amount of reflectivity.

NE2 - Private and Commercial Properties Lighting

- 1 Private and commercial properties, services and facilities lighting shall avoid adverse impacts on residential amenity, landscape character, and nighttime environments, wildlife and wildlife corridors by:
 - 1.1 avoiding large areas of glazing which would result in light spillage into rural and unlit areas;
 - 1.2 avoiding external lighting that causes light pollution in the wider landscape;
 - 1.3 retaining the measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area.

NE3 - Designated Local Green Spaces

The areas, identified on the maps below at NE3 - Maps, either continue to be, or are now designated, as Local Green Spaces in accordance with NPPF Policy HC2.

Five of these areas were designated as Local Green Spaces in the SMNDP:

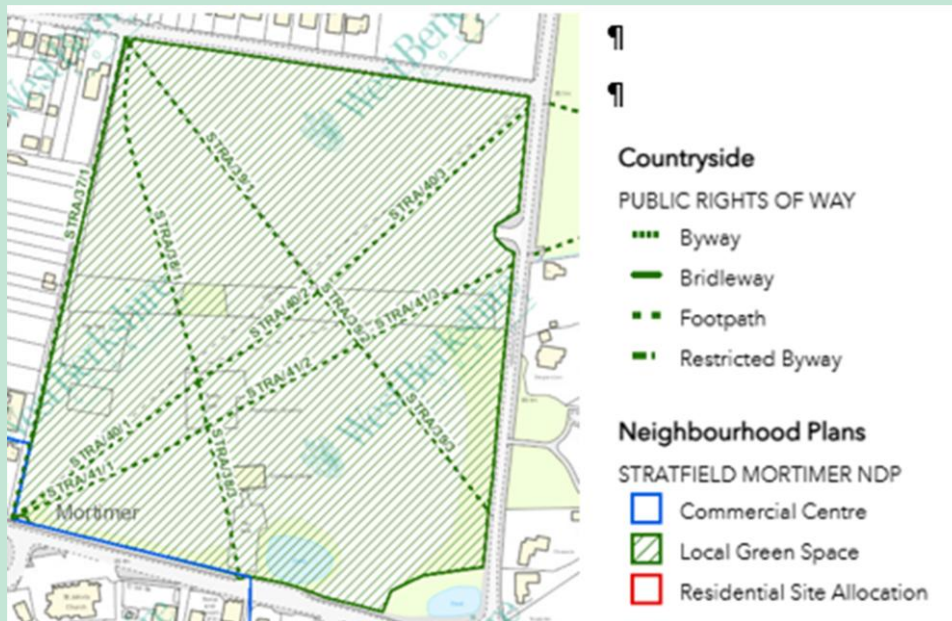
- The Fairground - see Policy GS1.1 of SMNDP;
- The War Memorial Island - see Policy GS1.2 of SMNDP;
- The Alfred Palmer Memorial Field - see Policy GS1.3 of SMNDP;
- Foudry Brook (including the watercourse, adjoining footpath, and a 10-metre strip either side from St Mary's Church southwest to the parish boundary) – see Policy GS1.4 of SMNDP);
- Windmill Common (see Policy GS1.5 of SMNDP).

Two new Local Green Spaces are designated by this SMNP:

- Tower House Farm Public Open Space (to be adopted by WBC);
- Strawberry Fields / Hammonds Heath Woodland (the area of woodland, bordering the Strawberry Fields estate to the south and bounded by Hammonds Heath to the west).

NE3 – Maps 1

1 The Fairground



2 The War Memorial Island

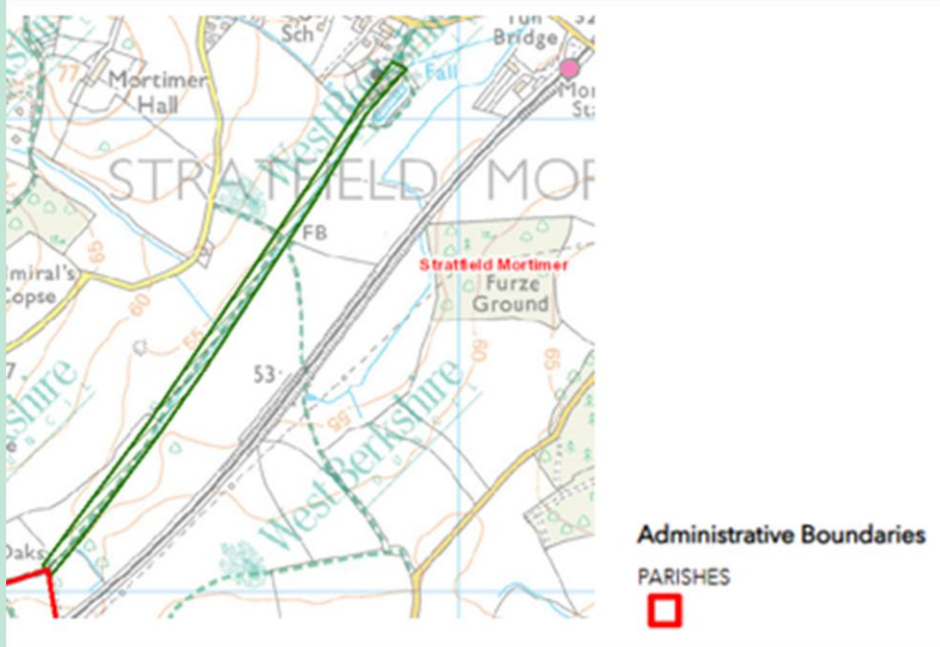


3 The Alfred Palmer Memorial Field



NE3 – Maps 2

- 4 **Foudry Brook** – including the watercourse, adjoining footpath, and a 10-metre strip either side from St Mary's Church southwest to the parish boundary



- 5 **Windmill Common** (nb, despite its name, this site is not registered common land))



NE3 – Maps 3

- 6 **Strawberry Fields / Hammonds Heath Woodland** (the area of woodland, bordering the Strawberry Fields estate to the south and bounded by Hammonds Heath to the west)



- 7 **Tower House Farm Public Open Space** (POS to be adopted by WBC)



Supporting Text

Natural Environment

85% of respondents to the June 2022 online questionnaire, identified a greater emphasis on 'Environment and Green Space' as the most important change needed to this SMNP.

This aligns with the NPPF and the LPR Policies SP10, SP11, DM5, DM6, DM15 and DM40.

Lighting

Public Lighting – Principle of Dark Skies

80% of respondents to the February 2023 consultation, stated that they did not believe there should be more street lighting in the village and the 'Dark Sky' policy in the SMNDP should be retained. This is consistent with the SMVDS.

Policies NE1, and NE2 seek to:

- limit public lighting to only where it is necessary for safety; and
- ensure that public and private lighting is not intrusive to neighbouring residents, harmful to wildlife or cause light pollution in the wider landscape.

This is consistent with NPPF Policy P3.2.e requiring development proposals to *"limit any adverse impact from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes (those areas entirely, or largely, uninterrupted by artificial light) and nature"*.

It also aligns with LPR Policy DM5(f), which requires all reasonable steps to limit obtrusive light—sky glow, glare, spill, and intrusion—and to prevent adverse impacts on wildlife and neighbouring residents.

Public Lighting – Safety Considerations

For the purposes of these policies, 'safety' refers to situations where the absence of lighting would create a foreseeable risk of harm to road users or pedestrians that cannot reasonably be resolved by other means.

Where lighting is essential, the policy seeks through design and location to limit lighting to the minimum that is necessary to mitigate the identified safety risk whilst keeping to the forefront the objective of maintaining the dark character of the parish. It expected that planning conditions will be used to secure appropriate mitigation to prevent unnecessary light pollution.

Local Green Spaces

Introduction

The proposed Local Green Spaces have been assessed against the criteria set out in NPPF Policy HC2 (see above). Each site is demonstrably special to the local community, holds particular local significance, is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, and is local in character rather than an extensive tract of land.

Five of those listed were designated as Local Green Spaces by Policy GS1 of the SMPNDP.

Existing/Proposed Local Green Spaces

	Description and Location	Local Significance / Special Qualities	NPPF LGS Criteria Met
The Fairground Owned by the Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Charity and leased to SMPC Designated as a LGS by Policy GS1.1 of SMNDP	Centrally located open space of approximately 8 hectares within the village core used for community events, fairs, recreation and informal gatherings Crossed by a number of public rights of way.	The Fairground is an important and historic community space at the heart of the settlement and is strongly associated with village identity and community life. It hosts a wide variety of social and recreational activities and provides an important visual and functional break within the built form of the village.	Beauty; Historic significance; Recreational value; Community value; Tranquillity
War Memorial Island Ownership is unclear (unregistered land possibly owned by WBC), but site and memorial are maintained by SMPC Designated as a LGS by Policy GS1.2 of SMNDP	Small, landscaped space located within the village centre focused around the village war memorial.	The space has strong historic and cultural significance as a place of remembrance and civic identity. It contributes positively to the character and appearance of the village centre and acts as an important focal point within the settlement.	Historic significance; Local distinctiveness; Community value
Alfred Palmer Memorial Field Owned by Alfred Palmer Memorial Trust Designated as a LGS by Policy GS1.3 of SMNDP	Recreational field used for organised sport and informal recreation, including use by the Mortimer FC.	The field provides an important recreational and sporting facility serving local residents and community organisations. It supports health and wellbeing objectives and forms an established part of community life.	Recreational value; Community value
Foudry Brook Watercourse and Corridor Ownership not known Designated as a LGS by Policy GS1.4 of SMNDP	Green corridor associated with the Foudry Brook chalk stream, including adjacent walking routes and ecological areas. Specifically (SMNDP) <i>“the watercourse and footpath and 10m strip either side from St Mary’s Church SW to the parish boundary”</i>	The corridor is of particular importance for biodiversity, ecological connectivity and landscape character. It provides habitat value associated with the chalk stream environment and forms part of the wider green infrastructure and walking network within the parish. The corridor also contributes to climate resilience and natural drainage functions.	Richness of wildlife; Beauty; Recreational value; Tranquillity

Windmill Common Owned in part by SMPC and in part by the Englefield Estate Trust Corporation Limited Designated as a LGS by Policy GS1.5 of SMNDP	Historic woodland area forming part of the settlement edge and containing a network of public rights of way.	Windmill Common is valued for its mature woodland character, biodiversity and contribution to the rural setting of the village. The area provides opportunities for walking and quiet enjoyment of the countryside and contributes strongly to settlement separation and landscape character.	Beauty; Richness of wildlife; Tranquillity; Recreational value
Tower House Farm Public Open Space Currently owned by the developer, TA Fisher, but due to be transferred to WBC	Public open space associated with the Tower House Farm development forming a landscape buffer and recreational area adjoining the settlement.	The open space contributes to the wider green infrastructure network and provides recreational opportunities for nearby residents. The area contains swales and drainage features which support sustainable drainage and climate adaptation functions. It also contributes to biodiversity corridors, visual amenity and settlement edge definition. Its close proximity to residential areas makes it particularly valuable to the local community.	Recreational value; Richness of wildlife; Beauty; Community value
Strawberry Fields / Hammonds Heath Woodland	Area of woodland adjacent to The Fairground with public footpaths linking to the wider rights of way network.	The woodland contributes significantly to the tranquil rural character surrounding the village and provides important opportunities for walking and informal recreation. The extensive tree cover and established habitats support biodiversity and ecological value. The site forms part of the green setting of the village and contributes positively to settlement edge definition and landscape character.	Richness of wildlife; Tranquillity; Recreational value; Beauty

Summary Assessment Matrix

LGS Name	Meets Criteria	Proximity to community	Demonstrably special	Local significance	Local Character	Extensive Tract of Land
The Fairground	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
War Memorial Island	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Alfred Palmer Memorial Field	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Foundry Brook Watercourse and Corridor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Windmill Common	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tower House Farm Public Open Space	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Strawberry Fields / Hammonds Heath Woodland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Employment, Facilities and Services Policies

Objectives

- To enhance the vitality and viability of the parish's Employment, Facilities and Services by seeking to encourage growth in employment opportunities, services and facilities
- To safeguard Assets of Community Value ("ACV"), ensuring they are retained, improved, or replaced, in order to support a strong and sustainable local community.
- To maintain and advance the vitality and viability of Mortimer's commercial centre, and the mix of retail, employment and community services, by concentrating developments into a defined area which enables them to be accessed on foot, by:
 - focusing new development within the commercial centre to increase footfall and support a sustainable environment, encouraging walking between employment, retail, facilities and services; and
 - avoiding dispersed or ad-hoc development in inappropriate locations.

Policies

EFS1 - Loss or Change of Use of Sites and Premises

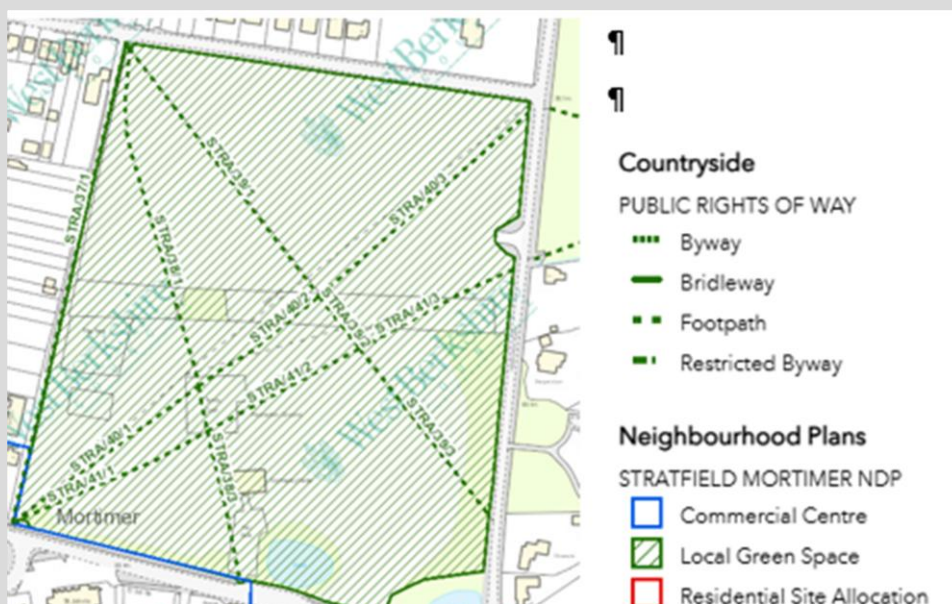
- 1 Proposals for the change of use of existing employment land or premises, or their total loss through redevelopment, will only be supported if:
 - 1.1 the changes proposed do not harm the vitality and viability of Mortimer's commercial centre, including its mix of retail, employment and community services;
 - 1.2 any changes of use outside of the commercial centre do not compete with, or detract from, the role of the village centre as the community's primary service hub.
- 2 This policy encompasses Use Classes B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution), E(a) (retail), E(g)ii and E(g)iii (research and development of products or processes and industrial processes).
- 3 The conversion of residential homes to business uses or the demolition of homes and replacement with commercial buildings will be resisted unless it is demonstrated within the submission that the loss of housing on the site is outweighed by economic benefits for the locality.
- 4 Where an existing building or site would be lost as a result of a proposal, it shall be supported by a robust marketing report showing that the building/site was marketed at a realistic price for at 12 months, with evidence including:
 - 4.1 confirmation by the agent of appropriate marketing;
 - 4.2 enquiry logs and follow-up reviews;

- 4.3 copies of property particulars, evidence of signage (ie photographs), evidence of online advertisement (ie screenshots).

EFS2 – Proposals for New Employment, Facilities and Services

- 1 Proposals for economic growth shall demonstrate that the proposed location is justified sequentially by prioritising the use of the commercial centre (see Figure EFS2.1 below), within 500m of a public transport interchange, or other Previously Developed Land first, followed by farm diversification if necessary and only where a sequential test demonstrates there are no feasible or available sites, alternative locations can be demonstrated as appropriate in accordance with the hierarchy:
 - 1.1 sites located within the Mortimer Village commercial centre (see figure EFS2.1);
 - 1.2 sites which are Previously Developed Land;
 - 1.3 sites within 500m of a public transport interchange;
 - 1.4 sites where a rural location is justified as necessary, re-use of existing farm or rural buildings; or
 - 1.5 other sites where accompanied by an impact assessment.
- 2 Proposals should:
 - 2.1 avoid significant adverse impacts on local residents, businesses, and countryside users from noise, smell, dust, pollution, traffic, or lighting;
 - 2.2 be of a proportionate scale to the locality.
- 3 Large-scale commercial, office, industrial, warehousing, or distribution developments which are designed to meet a regional level of demand will not be supported unless it is clearly demonstrated as a necessary location for the proposed use.

Figure EFS2.1 Mortimer Village Commercial Centre:



EFS3 - Assets of Community Value

- 1 The facilities listed in Table EFS3.1 below are identified as candidate Assets of Community Value, because they make an important contribution to the social wellbeing, recreational opportunities, health, and community cohesion of Mortimer.
- 2 Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or significant adverse impact to change of these facilities will only be supported where:
 - 2.1 it can be demonstrated that, following the facility being actively marketed for community use at a realistic price for a minimum period of 12 months, there is no reasonable prospect of the asset continuing in its existing community use; or
 - 2.2 an adequate replacement/provision of an equal or greater community value is made in an accessible location.
- 3 Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage with SMPC at the earliest opportunity in order to enable appropriate community consultation.

Table EFS3.1

Asset Category	Asset Name	Address	Primary Social Use	Status
Village Halls	St John's Hall	22 West End Rd, Mortimer, RG7 3TF	Events space, Playgroup, Mortimer Dramatic Society, MVP Theatre, Hurst Singers, Model Train Group	ACV Candidate
	Mortimer Methodist Church	17 West End Rd, Mortimer, RG7 3TB	Used by multiple groups including SMPC meetings, Local History Group, Mother & Toddler Group, Seniors Coffee Mornings, Warm Welcome, Senior and Junior Table tennis.	ACV Candidate
	Fairground Hall (Previously Community Centre)	The Street, Mortimer, RG7 3RD	Mortimer Cricket Club, MVP Seniors Lunch Club, Schools Breakfast club, WI, Ballet Lessons.	ACV Candidate
	Garth Hall	St John's Road, Mortimer	Hall, has been unsafe and thus closed for more than 10 years, it is currently under development to create a 'Hobby Hall' and thus is expected to come back into regular use.	Future ACV Candidate
Recreational Spaces	Fairground	The Street, Mortimer, RG7 3RD	Mortimer Cricket Pitch, Outdoor Multigym, Children's Play park, Exercise groups and Mini soccer groups, Mortimer Fun Day, Transport Through The Ages event, Mortimer Music Live events, Horse riding competitions.	ACV Candidate

Recreational Spaces cont	Alfred Palmer Memorial Field	West End Rd, Mortimer, RG7 3TL	Mortimer Football Club	ACV Candidate
Pubs	Horse & Groom	The Street, Mortimer RG7 3RD	Hosts Darts Team, used for meetings by MVP, Cricket Club, etc	ACV Candidate
	Victoria Arms	54 Victoria Road Mortimer RG7 3SE	Hosts Darts team, used for meeting by MVP etc	ACV Candidate
Other	Library	27 Victoria Rd, Mortimer RG7 3XD	Friends of the Library, Chess Club, Book Club, Lego Club, Craft & Chat, Seated Exercise & Wellbeing.	ACV Candidate
	Scout Hut	Birch Lane, Mortimer RG7 3UB	1st Mortimer Scouts	ACV Candidate

Supporting Text

Evidence – Community Survey November 2022

Employment

62% of respondents want to encourage development that enables new rural commercial activity. People would like to see opportunities for small businesses/ industrial units, more employment opportunities for locals, farm shops, art studios, or a butcher.

60% of respondents are unsure if there were sufficient opportunities for local businesses to expand, 23% said there were such opportunities.

Commercial Centre

The commercial centre has been determined by an analysis of the existing retail, commercial, businesses services, identifying their locations and plotting them onto a map of Mortimer village. Forty-three businesses have been identified; 28 businesses fall within the triangular area on the map which equates to 65%. Out of the remaining 15, 7 are off map in outlying areas.

ESF2 requires prioritisation of investment in Mortimer Village commercial centre, first and foremost to support the vitality and viability of the centre. The policy also requires prioritisation of sites which are located close to public transport interchanges (bus or rail) to enable a range of transport options for employees.

The policy also requires Previously Developed Land (“**PDL**”) as defined in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 to be prioritised, which aligns with the government's aims to make the re-use of PDL a first priority.

The policy provides flexibility for the re-use and re-development of farm buildings or other rural buildings where that location is shown to be necessary as part of the development

proposal. Other sites, ie those not meeting any of the criterion EFS2.1.1 to 1.4, are of least preference in the sequential approach and will be accepted only where they are accompanied by an impact assessment to evidence that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the commercial centre nor on the immediate location in environmental, heritage, ecological or sustainability terms.

Assets of Community Value

Community facilities play a vital role in supporting the health, wellbeing, and social cohesion of residents. They provide venues for sports, cultural activity, volunteering, education, youth provision, older people's services, and community events.

Mortimer benefits from a strong network of community infrastructure including village halls, recreation grounds, public houses, sports pitches, the library, and meeting facilities. These venues support a wide range of organised activities and informal community interaction and contribute significantly to the sustainability of the parish.

Several of these facilities are designated, or identified as candidates for designation, as Assets of Community Value under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. Their protection is consistent with the NPPF which seeks to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued community facilities.

The loss of these facilities would reduce opportunities for social participation and weaken the resilience and identity of the community. This policy therefore seeks to ensure their retention wherever possible, while supporting proposals that improve their accessibility, adaptability and long-term viability.

To evidence the inclusion of these assets, there was a public consultation via SMNP and local community Facebook pages, along with SMPC & SMNP Websites to request support for list and additions / subtractions. The consultation attracted five responses in support with one requesting the addition of The Scout Hut.