

Site Allocation Evidence

Background

In May 2014 it was agreed in principle with West Berkshire Council (WBC) that Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) through the Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) would select the site(s) to accommodate 110 new homes. This was formally approved by a meeting of the full West Berkshire Council (November 2015) in the Housing Site Allocation DPD (section 2.3.2)

Utilising the WBC site SA/SEA (see Evidence Base (57)) and local knowledge, the NDP considered the sites identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) - Kiln Lane (MOR001), West End Rd. (MOR005), South of St John's School (MOR006 – St John's site) and Spring Lane (MOR008) (see Appendix 1). The site MOR004 was not included as it was already approved for development and site MOR007 was not included because it is not well related to the village and is not adjacent to the existing settlement boundary. Both the MOR006 and MOR001 sites could accommodate the 110 homes; the other sites either alone or in combination could not satisfy the requirement. Another site would need to be identified or to utilise a part of either MOR006 or MOR001.

At the 2014 exhibition the WBC (SHLAA) was exhibited. Feedback indicated an option of distributed smaller sites should be considered.

Throughout the preparation of the NDP the community expressed concern about the ability of St John's Infant School (at capacity and below the regulation requirement for outside space), St Mary's Junior School and the Doctor's surgery to cope with the increasing demands as the parish and surrounding areas grow.

The community also expressed concern that there are an insufficient number of homes suitable as 'starter' homes and for those who wish to 'downsize'.

During the preparation of the NDP, Hallam Land Management (HLM) presented a series of proposals for the development of the Kiln Lane site including conducting their own consultation. Two of the three proposals from HLM were considered by the NDP. A third proposal was presented via a consultation carried out by HLM encompassing the whole community without NDP or Parish knowledge or involvement. This was undertaken during the period the NDP questionnaire consultation was being conducted. These proposals and NDP conclusions are reviewed in Appendix 2.

Consideration of the allocation of the site was an iterative process. At the end of each stage recommendations were presented to the Parish Council for their approval before progressing to the next iteration.

Strategic Options

Based on the WBC SHLAA, WBC SA/SEA (2014), the Parish Council's stated preference for site (s) close to the centre of the village and the feedback from the July 2014 Exhibition, three strategic options were developed.

1. Locate up to 110 homes on the single site behind St John's Site (MOR006)
2. Locate up to 110 homes on a number of smaller sites distributed around the village of Mortimer (e.g. Site 3, Hammonds Heath see Appendix 3)
3. Locate the majority of homes on the single site (St John's site) with one or two smaller sites (a combination of options 1 and 2).

A number of smaller sites were identified in addition to the West End Road site (MOR005) and Spring Lane site (MOR008) to enable option 2 to be delivered (See Appendix 3). The landowners of the additional sites agreed in principle to make the land available. These smaller sites ranged in size from 8 - 35 homes and are listed in Appendix 3.

The strategic options were presented to the Parish Council and adopted to go forward to the 2015 exhibition

Considerations

With regard to the St John's site the WBC SA/SEA (2014) identified that

"Access is an issue which needs resolving (potentially through land acquisition) before this site could come forward for development. It is therefore probable that this site will be phased to come forward later in the plan period to give time to resolve this issue."

The landowner was approached to address this issue. The NDP and the SMPC received the necessary assurances that access could be provided which gave the NDP confidence that this site could be considered.

Subsequently this confidence has been confirmed. The SA/SEA for the site included in the WBC DPD November 2015 states

- *"... the site promoter has confirmed that access will be gained to the site via the TA Fisher site to the north of the site. This access point is way from the infant school and therefore, would reduce any possible road safety issues with having access close to the school."*

This arrangement has been confirmed by TA Fisher in their representation to the Pre-Submission consultation and subsequent discussions. (see Appendix 4).

The NDP considered whether land should be reserved for a new and relocated St John's Infant School, St Mary's Junior School and/or the Doctor's surgery in the NDP.

1. WBC in their SA/SEA (2014) identified that St John's Infant School is at capacity. The school's outdoor play area is less than the minimum requirement. Discussions were held with WBC Education, and the school's Head and Chairman of Governors whether the relocation and building of a new school would be supported and to assess the probability of funding being available. Though funding cannot be guaranteed WBC Education stated that a new expanded St John's and therefore funding is close to the top of the priority list. St John's school responded positively to the idea of a new relocated school. All parties supported the idea of reserving land for a new school if the landowner/developer was willing, thereby keeping the opportunity of a new school open whilst the possibility was investigated in particular whether funding would be available and a planning application prepared.
2. A similar discussion concerning St Mary's Junior School was less positive. All parties considered it very unlikely that funding would be forthcoming in the period of the NDP (i.e. by 2026). It was agreed that reserving space for a new relocated school was not appropriate.
3. The surgery has limited parking space necessitating parking on Victoria Road. Discussions were held with the Doctor's Surgery about a possible relocation and the building of a larger surgery. The funding of a new relocated surgery is uncertain. However, the Doctor's do not rule out such a development. Relocating the doctors' surgery would allow better parking, enable future expansion to cater for additional and/or devolved services and the possibility of increased home care services for the elderly. NHS England are a year or so into a 5-year study into devolving certain services currently provided by hospitals out to doctor's surgeries. The NDP concluded that the opportunity to have a new surgery near the centre of the village should not be lost and that it was prudent to reserve land at this time.

The conclusion was that a consideration for site selection should be the ability to reserve land for a new and relocated St John's Infant School and Doctor's surgery. The reserved land ideally should be close to the centre of the village. The relocation of St Mary's next to a relocated St John's School, though having many benefits, the low probability that funding would be available, was judged to make the reservation of land inappropriate. Representations to the pre-submission consultation from Stratfield Mortimer Benefice and the Governor's of St Mary's have indicated their wish that the opportunity to relocate St Mary's be kept open.

Site Allocation

Only two of the identified sites can enable strategic option 1, Kiln Lane (MOR001) or St John's Site (MOR006). Though the Kiln Lane site is closer to St Mary's School (c800m, St John's Site c1300m) and the station (c1300m, St John's Site c1700m), the St John's site was selected for option 1 for the following reasons:

1. It is better related to the village
 - a. Closer to the centre of the village (St John's Church/Post Office) (adjacent, Kiln Lane c800m,)
 - b. Opposite the recreation area of the Fairground and its play facilities, community centre etc.
 - c. Next to the present St John's Infant school
 - d. Closer to the Doctor's Surgery (c600m, Kiln Lane c1100m)
 - e. Parish Council stated preference was for a site(s) close to the centre of the village.
2. The landowner/developer of the St John's site confirmed their willingness to reserve land for a new St John's School and Doctor's surgery which would place these at the centre of the village (see appendix 5).
3. The site will have a lower impact on the character of the village
 - a. It is surrounded by development on three sides, whereas Kiln Lane is surrounded by countryside on three sides
 - b. The St John's site better maintains a compact village, filling in a space between two developed parts of the village close to its centre; the Kiln Lane site would extend the village.
 - c. The St John's site would be less visible from most of the village, the Kiln Lane site would be more visible on the approaches to the centre of the village.
 - d. Historic Landscape Characterisation of the St John's site is designated 'Low' sensitivity, the Kiln Lane site is designated 'High' sensitivity.
4. With emphasis on providing 'starter' and 'downsizer' homes, the St John's site being very close to the centre of the village is beneficial for young families and the elderly population.
5. Though Kiln Lane site is closer to the station, the 1.3km walk is a significant distance with the return from the station uphill with an approximate walking time of 20/25 minutes.
6. The WBC preferred options selected the St John's site and rejected the Kiln Lane site (WBC SA/SEA 2015 see Evidence Base (57)).

Community Opinion

At the 2015 exhibition the three strategic options were put to the village for comment and discussion. Option one was based on the St John's Site. 137 feedback cards on the location of the residential development for 110 homes were returned of which 124 selected an option (see Table 1). One return was invalid.

Option	No of returns supporting the option	% of returns supporting the option	+/- 95% Confidence Level
1 Single Central Site	84	62.2	8.4
2 Distributed Sites	15	11.1	5.4
3 Combination of 1 and 2	25	18.5	6.7
No Choice made	11	8.1	

Table 1 - Exhibition 2015 Strategic Site Option Preferences

The sample size, the wide distribution of attendees across the parish (see Pin Map Appendix 6) and the substantial preference for option 1 is a fair representation of the views of the whole community opinion at the 95% confidence level. At the discussion groups the general conclusion was that the St John's site was the preferred option. During discussions the Kiln Lane site and the idea of a site near the station was discussed but received little support.

Arising from the exhibition one letter of objection to the single site behind St John's School was received.

Following the exhibition the options were refined further to

1. Place the 110 homes on the St John's site
2. Place the majority of homes on the St John's site plus small site of Kings Street and infill
3. Reject both options and propose an alternative.

The Parish Council approved this proposition for inclusion in the questionnaire consultation.

The questionnaire consultation returns strongly supported the reservation of land for a new St John's School and Doctor's surgery. The overwhelming majority of the 1228 respondents registering their site preference preferred the 'St John's' site and a substantial majority selected the St John's site as the preferred option for all 110 homes (see Table 2). 187 rejected options (a) and (b), an analysis of these responses is given in Table 3

	Questionnaire	
	Result %	+/-
a) St Johns Only	54.6	3.0
b) St John's plus Kings St (8/10 homes) and infill	30.2	2.7
Neither a) or b)	15.2	2.1

Table 2 – Questionnaire Consultation 2015 Site Preferences

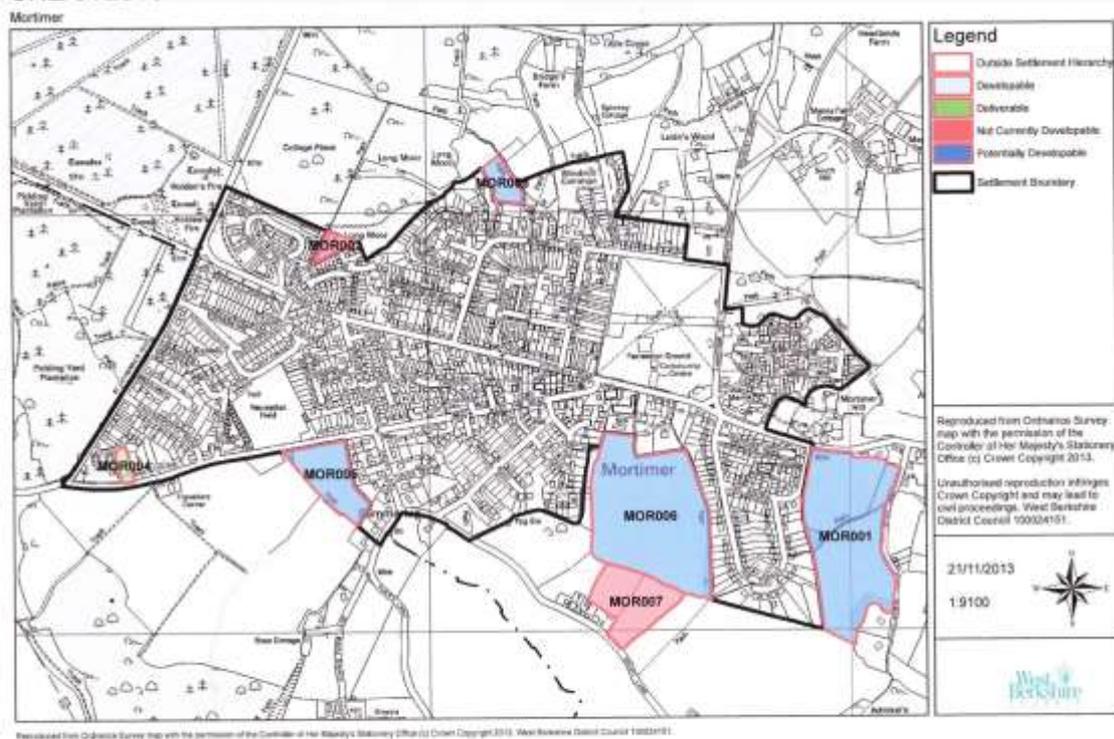
	Number	Percentage of those that selected neither a) or b) in QU 7
Number of responses to Qu 7 that selected 'Neither a) or b)'	187	100.0%
Number of responses commenting on reasons for rejection	164	87.7%
General comments /no alternative site suggested	26	12.3%
Number of responses that suggested alternative sites	138	73.8%
		Percentage of suggested alternative sites (138)
Number of responses suggesting 'a number of smaller distributed sites' (option 2 at the exhibition)	81	58.7%
Number of responses suggesting 'alternative large site'	21	15.2%
Number of responses that do not want any more houses in Mortimer or selected sites outside Mortimer	24	17.4%
Other sites	12	8.7%

Table 3 – Analysis of 187 Responses Rejecting both Options (a) and (b)

Of the 21 responses suggesting alternatives to the site behind St John's School, 11 were too small to accommodate 110 homes without building multi-storey blocks of flats. 9 suggested The Kiln Lane site (North and South fields). Two responses suggested land opposite St Mary's School. [NOTE one response selected Kiln Lane and field opposite St Mary's School]

The selected site (behind St John's School) was placed on the NDP website on 4th June 2015 as a draft policy for comment with a closing date of 20th June 2015. No comments were received. Subsequently two drafts of the NDP were placed on the website for comment on the 30th June 2015 and 25th August 2015. No comments were received.

The selected site was put to the Parish Council on the 8th October 2015 as part of the NDP and was adopted.



Hallam Land Management
Kiln Lane Site Proposals and Consultation

Appendix 2

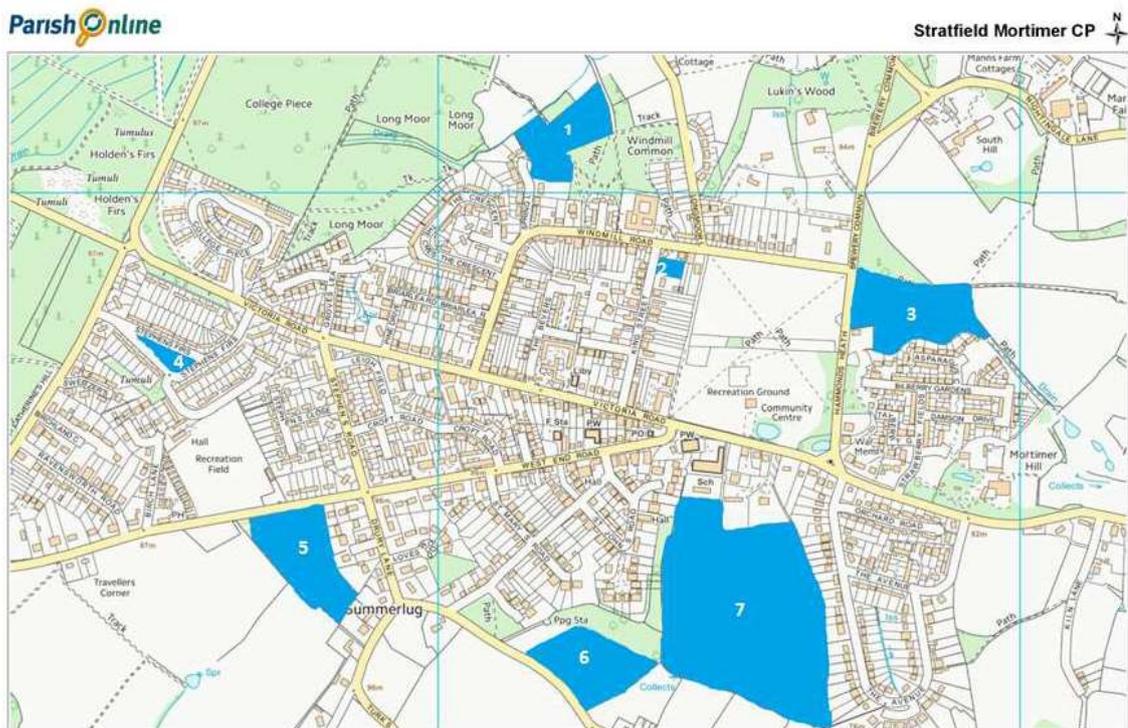
During the preparation of the NDP (November 2014), Hallam Land Management (HLM) presented proposals for the development of the Kiln Lane site for 110 homes. This proposal was rejected for the reasons detailed above in 'Site Selection'. On the 20th April 2015 HLM presented an up dated proposal for 67 homes on the Kiln Lane site (NOTE The questionnaire had been printed and was ready for delivery for the start of the questionnaire consultation on the 24th April). The proposal did not satisfy the large single site option and was too large to be considered as a smaller dispersed site. The proposal was rejected.

During the questionnaire consultation period HLM conducted a parallel consultation. They contacted every household in the parish with a third proposition for up to 50 dwellings on the Kiln Lane site. This proposal would have been larger than the smaller sites considered for the distributed option; nor did it satisfy the characteristics of a single site close to the centre of the village. HLM directed recipients to a website to enable people to submit responses. Over 60% of the responses HLM received were negative/objected to the proposal.

Dispersed Sites Map

Proposed dispersed sites were 1-6.

Smaller Sites	Approximate Number of Dwellings
Spring Lane 1	15
Kings Street 2	8
Hammonds Heath 3	30
Fir Lees 4	10
West End Road 5	35
Drury Lane site 6	20



Site Access

Appendix 4

TA Fisher have confirmed that access to the site will be via the Tower House development as shown on the drawing below by the blue arrows, the Site is to the South of the Tower House development

