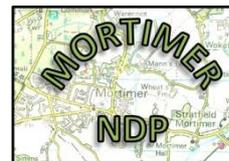




Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan

Minutes of the Public Meeting
held on Monday 21st September 2015 at 19.30pm
at the St John's Hall



Present:

Steering group members: Patrick Wingfield (PW) – Chairman, Tennant Barber (TB) deputy Chairman, Danusia Morsley (DM), Dudley Ives (DI), Neil Kiley (NK)

Consultants: John Cornwell (Independent planning consultant), Graham Bell (Bell Cornwell), Jane Rabbiosi (Research & admin assistant)

Public & Press present: 78

The hall opened at 19.00. Members of the public were invited to read the NDP Site Design Brief displays which had been set up either side of the hall.

The public meeting commenced at 19.45.

PW addressed the public and explained that the reason for the meeting was to get the public view on the site design brief ideas shown in the displays. He described how the NDP public consultation events in the past had brought us to this point and briefly explained the purpose of the NDP. PW invited questions from the public. Below is a summary of questions asked and answers given:

- Q. How big will the new school be?
A. WBC suggests if a new school is built, it will be a three-form intake.
- Q. Is there a house between the current school and the site allocated for the new school?
A. There is a house in between the current school and the site. It has right of way over an Englefield drive which would become a footpath/cycleway.
- Q. Could St Mary's Junior School and St John's Infant School be merged to make a primary school on the new site?
A. No. WBC has advised that they do not have funding to amalgamate the schools.
- Q. Is the suggested car park going to be big enough to accommodate both school and doctors parking?
A. The size of car park is based on parking for the doctors' surgery and school staff. WBC does not support parking for parents at schools as it is seen as anti-sustainability and in contradiction to the 'walk to school' initiatives, they favour a 'kiss and drop' approach.
- Q. What plans are there for traffic controlling at the junction with The Street? Will it be a roundabout? And if so will that be lit? Will there be traffic lights?
A. It is too soon to have detailed plans for this. Suggestions are welcomed.
- Q. Could an alternative access route be built?
A. There is no option for an alternative access route.
- Q. Who owns the land which the current school is on?
A. The land is owned by the church.
- Q. What plans are there for the old school site if the school moves into the new development?
A. There are no current plans. There are policies written into the NDP which state that if any major changes to the plan, then this goes back to public consultation and an update to the NDP
- Q. Is there any scope to change the site selected at this point? Or is it a fait accompli?

- A. There is no scope to change the site selected at this stage. PW described the public consultation process to date, to explain how the public had been consulted extensively to reach this decision on which site is preferred.
- Q. Why did development plans not come up in new house purchase searches?
- A. Searches would generally only show up planning applications / permission granted. There are no plans submitted at this point. Good lawyers/conveyancers might have looked deeper into WBC plans
- Q. Why did I not receive a questionnaire?
- A. We do not know. Steering group members and a team of volunteers hand delivered a questionnaire to every household in the parish.
- Q. Why did the questionnaire not give a larger number of sites to choose from?
- A. Site selection had been narrowed down by WBC and by public consultation prior to the preparing the questionnaire.
- Q. Why was the plan changed from only developing halfway down the St John site, to developing the entire site?
- A. WBC originally showed the site as being only developed half way down. WBC has since advised the NDP SG against allocating only part of any site as the remainder would almost inevitably get built on in addition
- Q. Is there a way to view the communications between WBC and NDP Steering Group regarding the site selection?
- A. WBC have been in communication with the Parish Council regarding site selection. These communications can be found in meeting minutes and there is a record of events in the NDP evidence base under West Berkshire Council Statement of Consultation App D [Page 68].
- Q. How many people responded to the questionnaire?
- A. 1285, 40% of the electoral roll which is an exceptionally high response rate.
- Q. How many voted for the site?
- A. 1228, 83% chose one single site or one site + other smaller sites.
- Q. If there is not funding for schools and doctors, why is it important to have central site with enough space to allocate land for them?
- A. The new school and surgery relocation are not guaranteed, however the public voted that if possible they would like land to be set aside for these facilities.
- Q. With 110 new homes, possibly a new school and relocated surgery, has any thought been given to how traffic will be managed along the access route during peak times?
- A. There is already a school, so school traffic will not change significantly from how it is today. Not all residents will be on the road at the same time. There will be some increase in traffic, but not nearly as significant as is feared. Graham Bell from Bell Cornwell advised that he was the planning advisor for the Strawberry Fields development and he advised that there were similar concerns about the access to this site which have proven to be ill-founded.
- Q. Do you have specific information on plans for the access road junction with The Street?
- A. We are not yet at the point where details like this have been decided. Suggestions are welcome. A solution will be found.
- Q. If we vote against the NDP at referendum, do we then lose control of numbers of houses, design of the development, housing mix etc?
- A. Yes, this then falls back into the hands of WBC & developers
- Q. Why is it important to have this particular central site, when it is not guaranteed that a school and doctors will be built?
- A. WBC's original preferred site list was based on development being central to the village. This was the most central site, large enough for 110 houses.
- Q. Why has the Kiln Land site not been investigated further as an option? Who was it who decided that the Post Office is the centre of the village?
- A. The Kiln Lane site was not the preferred site of SMPC when first consulted by WBC due to its being further from village centre and access onto The Street being nearer bends in the road. The post office/ St. John's Church area is generally regarded as the central point in the village
- Q. What are the drawings of homes next to the access route ?

- A. TA Fisher new plans for 17 homes on the Tower House & Fairwinds sites for which planning application is about to be made.
- Q. Have Thames Water been contacted and, if so, what have they said?
- A. Yes. Thames Water have issued a Grampian condition whereby development cannot begin until a scheme has been devised to cope with the additional demands on water supply and sewerage
- Q. If voted in favour at referendum, when would building begin?
- A. If referendum is held in March 2016 as expected, it is work on site is likely to between Spring and Summer 2017.
- Q. When will the social housing be built?
- A. At the same time as the other homes.
- Q. Had the public known that neither a new school nor doctors' surgery was a certainty, do you think they might have voted for a different site?
- A. The Questionnaire was carefully phrased to make it clear that neither were guaranteed.
- Q. Could a buffer of trees be planted along the boundary with The Avenue?
- A. Yes, it is in the design brief to do so.
- Q. Could we choose the type of trees planted?
- A. It is too soon in the process to get into this level of detail but suggestions would be welcomed.
- Q. If new school and relocated surgery are not built, what will happen?
- A. If no progress in the building of these has been made in 5 years, there will be a reassessment of the land allocation for these.
- Q. What is the plan for updating the infrastructure, if school and surgery are not built and houses are built in their place?
- A. Infrastructure will be designed to accommodate either.
- Q. The topography of the site is undulating; will this mean that there will be a need for extensive excavation and groundworks?
- A. The site design brief has been written in a way to work with the topography and therefore reduce the amount of major groundworks. It is also costly; therefore developers avoid doing so where possible.
- Q. Will the TA Fisher 17 homes be taken off the 110 allocation?
- A. No but the expectation is that they will be taken off future allocation.
- Q. What can be done to better publicise future NDP consultation events?
- A. Suggestions are welcome. Methods used to publicise events to date have included: notices on NDP website, notices on Parish Council website, notices on MVP Facebook page, large signs on fairground fence, notices in the window of Budgens supermarket, leaflets through doors and notices on the parish notice boards.
- Q. Why was more of an effort not made to specifically contact the neighbours of the site?
- A. It would be un-democratic to give priority to any minority grouping. Every effort has been made to make all households in the parish aware of the NDP.
- Q. Does the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money paid to Parish Council increase if there is an NDP in place?
- A. Yes, it goes from 15% without an NDP to 25% if there is one.

Others comments:

- Contractors should be forced to provide parking on site for their own construction vehicles where possible.
- Traffic along the street needs to be sorted out before site is developed as it is an "accident waiting to happen".
- Expansion of the doctors surgery needs to be a priority as the waiting time for non-emergency appointments is already too long.
- More homes in Mortimer is a WBC directive, therefore complaints regarding the allocation should be directed to WBC or your MP, rather than the people trying to reduce impact by creating the NDP.
- It seems an odd site to choose as there are houses on three sides of the

site and therefore many more people will be affected by the development than there would have been if other sites had been selected.

- Our house prices will be negatively affected. We should be given the opportunity to claim some money back from WBC or the land owners.
- We should vote 'No' and take our chances with the developers
- The NDP steering group have put in a lot of work over the last 18 months on behalf of the Parish and have acted in a democratic way.
- The NDP is being produced to protect and preserve the parish and should be supported.
- WBC and developers should be issued a Grampion condition to sort out infrastructure issues before development can begin.
- A representative from Mortimer St Johns said that the governors supported the proposal for a new school and they will go to WBC when a new site is available and ask for the funding, the diocese will also support this move.

The meeting was called to a close at 21.30