

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(1)	20/00674/FUL Stratfield Mortimer	11 May 2020 ¹	Change of use of land and the construction of a 150 space car park with alterations to the highway, landscaping, and associated works. Land to the South east of Mortimer Station, Station Road, Mortimer. Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council.
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 7 August 2020.			

The application can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=20/00674/FUL>

Recommendation Summary: The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to refuse planning permission.

Ward Members: Councillor Graham Bridgman
Councillor Royce Longton
Councillor Geoffrey Mayes

Reason for Committee Determination: Ward Member call in by Councillor Bridgman if recommended for refusal as a major application by the parish council, with project identified in the Neighbourhood Development Plan which would need a debate if proposed to be refused.

Committee Site Visit: Owing to social distancing restrictions, the option of a committee site visit is not available. Instead, a collection of photographs is available to view at the above link.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for change of use of land and construction of a 150 space car park with alterations to the highway, landscaping and associated works.
- 1.2 The site is to the north west corner of a large agricultural field which is bounded by trees and hedging. There is an agricultural access onto the site off Station Road to the north, opposite a row of semi-detached dwellings. The railway line is beyond the western boundary of the site. The Mortimer station buildings are Grade II* listed. The site is outside of a defined settlement boundary, and the nearest settlement of Stratfield Mortimer is to the west.
- 1.3 The submitted application includes:
 - arboricultural method statement,
 - extended phase 1 ecological survey,
 - statement of community involvement,
 - transport statement,
 - landscape visual impact assessment,
 - heritage statement,
 - highways technical note,
 - letters in response to comments from Network Rail and the Local Lead Flood Authority,
 - and drawings showing the proposed layout, sections and layout of the ramp and steps to the station platform, tree protection plan and surface water drainage strategy.
- 1.4 The proposed layout is for a new proposed vehicle access further east along Station Road opposite dwelling No. 5. The internal access road would go west and open out into the car park running north south along the western boundary. The car park would have an elongated oval circulation route with 2 central parking rows and a row either side of the internal road. A drop off area is proposed to the north of the site.
- 1.5 Around the car park would be landscaping and a larger area to the west of the site where it would be on the boundary with the remainder of the agricultural field. However, most of the planting shown on this side is outside of the red line and there is no blue line indicating that this land is under the control of the applicant.
- 1.6 The pedestrian route through the site is between the central car park rows and towards the north of the site. This would join proposed ramp access to the station platform. A pedestrian access onto Station Road is proposed to the west of the existing agricultural access along Station Road and over the bridge. The existing agricultural access would be stopped up and planted with hedging.
- 1.7 Part of the proposed drainage is for an elongated oval narrow attenuation basin between Station Road and the internal road roughly behind the existing agricultural access. A larger triangular attenuation pond is proposed to the other side of the internal road to the north east boundary of the site. Banking is shown on the boundary with Station Road to the north west of the site.
- 1.8 Trees to the boundary with the railway line and along Station Road are proposed to be retained. Works to provide the steps/ramp to the platform and the footway over the bridge will be within the root protection areas of some trees.

2. Planning History

2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site.

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
08/01464/FUL	Provision of car park for 100 cars to serve Mortimer Station.	Refused September 2008. Dismissed at appeal March 2009.

2.2 The appeal decision (included within the agenda) of 2009 was made under the West Berkshire District Local Plan Saved Policies 2007, and the South East Plan. The South East Plan has since been revoked (except for one policy) which is not relevant to this application) and more policies of the Local Plan Saved Policies 2007 have now been replaced. The West Berkshire Core Strategy was adopted in 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework came into force the same year. The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan was made in 2017. The appeal proposal was for the car park to be laid out east/west towards the north boundary of the site.

2.3 The appeal decision noted the restricted visibility caused by the bridge on Station Road and the hazard it presents where the road is relatively narrow to those using it with pushchairs or wheelchairs (paragraphs 12 and 13). It also considered that proposal to be “an intrusive, large scale urbanising element in the countryside, and would be particularly obtrusive in the setting of the village on the approach from the south east” (paragraph 17). It also considered the level of car parking proposed to not be justified or contribute positively to the promotion of sustainable travel choices (paragraphs 24 and 26).

3. Procedural Matters

3.1 EIA: The nature and scale of this development is considered to fall within the description of 10(b) urban development listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. As such, EIA screening is required. The screening opinion found that the proposal is not EIA Development within the meaning of the Regulations and an Environmental Statement was not required as part of the planning application.

3.2 Publicity: A site notice was displayed on a fence post on 19 March 2020; the deadline for representations expired on 9 April 2020. A public notice was displayed in the Reading Chronicle on 26 March 2020.

3.3 CIL: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on most new development to pay for new infrastructure required as a result of the new development. CIL will be charged on residential (C3 and C4) and retail (A1 - A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more than 100 square metres of net floorspace (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres). Any CIL liability will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following the grant of any permission. More information is available at www.westberks.gov.uk/cil

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. Mortimer Parish Council are the applicant.

WBC Highways:	Objection to the proposed footway over the bridge on Station Road.
Archaeology:	No objection subject to condition for archaeological supervision during development.
Conservation:	No objection following receipt of additional information.
Historic England:	No comments to make.
Network Rail:	Initial objection. Objection withdrawn following receipt of additional information.
Ecology:	No objection subject to conditions to secure biodiversity mitigation measures and enhancements.
Tree Officer:	Clarification required on trees by the footway over the bridge on Station Road. Otherwise no objection subject to conditions on landscaping, arboricultural and tree protection matters
Landscape Consultant:	Objection. Impact of a large area for parking 150 cars, new access with signage and lighting introduces development into open countryside which will not be possible to successfully mitigate.
Transport Policy:	No comments received.
Local Lead Flood Authority:	Objection. Insufficient information to confirm suitability of proposed drainage strategy.

Public representations

- 4.2 Representations have been received from 5 contributors, all of whom object to the proposal. A letter of support was included in the application submission from Great Western Railway.
- 4.3 The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. In summary, the following issues/points have been raised:
- 50% increase in parking proposed on site compared to previously refused application;
 - Lack of justification for level of car parking proposed and in light of COVID-19 epidemic the long term impacts on commuting to work;

- Proposal does not address previous issue of impact on rural landscape, on productive agricultural land and would be highly visible;
- Green Park station and associated parking for Grazeley to be completed soon;
- Potential alternative car parking sites were identified by the Parish Council in 2013 including the field adjacent to the existing station car park and issues of deliverability of this site;
- Disabled access whilst beneficial is not a legal requirement;
- Issues of safety of vulnerable people using proposed footway including the gradient of the footway;
- Issues with impact on businesses using existing station access and their level of traffic movements onto Station Road both on accessibility from conflict with proposed footway and in queuing at proposed traffic lights;
- Issues with large vehicles needing to cross the bridge and conflict with pedestrians;
- Submitted landscape and visual impact assessment acknowledges high impacts on local residents;
- Issues of pollution including cutting carbon emissions and drainage;
- Issues of construction/delivery vehicles;
- Issues of additional traffic from provision of additional car parking.

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

- Policies ADPP1, ADPP6, CS5, CS8, CS13, CS14, CS16, CS17, CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (WBCS).
- Policies OVS.5, OVS.6, TRANS.1, and Appendix 5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).
- Policies GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD6, IS3, B2, B3 of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017).

5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire (2011-2026)
- Manual for Streets
- WBC Quality Design SPD (2006)
- WBC Sustainable Drainage SPD (2019)
- WBC Cycle and Motorcycle Advice and Standards for New Development
- West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

6. Appraisal

6.1 The main issues for consideration in this application are:

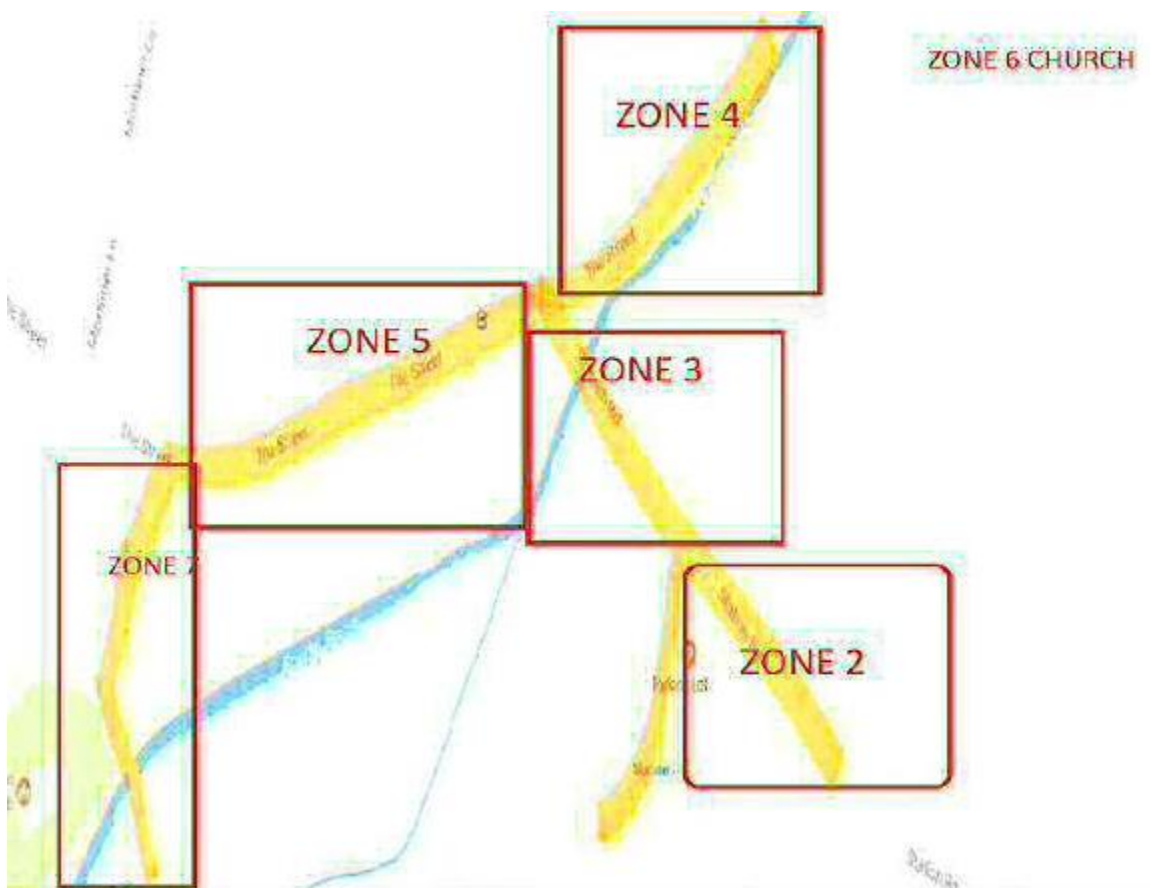
- Principle of development
- Character and appearance
- Quality of life

- Biodiversity
- Tree protection
- Flooding and drainage
- Highways

Principle of development

- 6.2 According to Policy ADPP1, development in West Berkshire will follow the existing settlement pattern, and only appropriate limited development in the countryside will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy. Policy ADPP6 states that development in the countryside will be strictly controlled. The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan establishes the principle of additional car parking to serve Mortimer Rail Station under policy IS3. This policy states that an extension to the station car parking will be promoted and encouraged. It does not identify a particular site or allocate land for the extension to the car parking. Nor does it state the level of additional car parking identified as being required.
- 6.3 The Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire 2011-2026 is a material planning consideration. Pedestrian and cycle links to Mortimer Station are highlighted as locally important improvements in the East Kennet Valley area (paragraph 6.6.3). Opportunities to improve accessibility from Mortimer to employment and essential services in nearby towns will be sought (paragraph 6.6.11). The Council will work in partnership with Network Rail, the train operating company and Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council to enhance security, cycle parking, and passenger information and waiting facilities at Mortimer rail station. Further improvements will also be sought to allow better access to the station, including making the station's platforms fully accessible to all rail passengers (paragraph 6.6.13).
- 6.4 The submitted Statement of Community Involvement sets out a survey conducted in June and July 2018 to evidence the need for the 150 space car park to serve Mortimer station. It found that:
- a) 85 respondents use Mortimer station daily, 67 a few times a week, 59 weekly, 103 monthly, 100 less than this, and 47 never (paragraph 4.15 quotes these as percentages but the total would be greater than 100% so it's assumed the numbers are total respondents rather than percentages);
 - b) 119 respondents did not travel by train due to the lack of car parking at Mortimer station (paragraph 4.12);
 - c) 203 respondents travel by car as a single occupant to a station (paragraph 4.21). It's not known if these are to Mortimer or another station (the question doesn't specify the station although it's within the section on Mortimer). Paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the statement of community involvement note that all respondents who travel to work were invited to participate including those who do not use Mortimer station;
 - d) 377 respondents would travel by train more frequently if it was easier to park at the station (paragraph 4.24), and 444 respondents agreed more car parking should be provided at Mortimer station (although the number of additional spaces or where they might be located was not included in the question) (paragraph 4.25).
- 6.5 The Statement of Community Involvement estimates that the survey was sent to around a third of residents within the catchment of Mortimer Station (paragraph 4.36) which it states are postcodes RG7 1, RG7 2 and RG7 3.

- 6.6 Of the 85 respondents who use Mortimer Station daily it is not known how many drive to it or if they are the sole occupant of vehicles. Similarly it is not known how regularly respondents who do not currently use the station due to lack of parking would use the station if the parking were to be increased.
- 6.7 Whilst the submitted Statement of Community Involvement demonstrates that there is demand for more parking at Mortimer Station it is difficult to assess from it the actual additional spaces required. According to the GWR website Mortimer has 53 car parking spaces, two of which are for disability vehicles).
- 6.8 The submitted Transport Assessment appendices include a count of occupied parking spaces at the existing station car park undertaken on Tuesday 4 July 2017 between 7am and 7pm. The highest occupancy was 49 spaces at 4.30pm, an occupancy of 92% including the disability vehicle spaces. At no point during survey was the car park at capacity, but it was at more than 80% at capacity for 8 of the 12 hours.
- 6.9 The Transport Assessment also included a parking beat survey on The Street and Station Road. No vehicles were observed in zones 2, 3 and 6 at any time and zone 7 was only associated with school and church parking.



- 6.10 Vehicles stated as “station related” in zone 4 were 10 vehicles at 4.30pm. In zone 5 12 vehicles were quoted as “station related” at 4.30pm. Also in zone 5, 3 parked cars were stated as “went to station” in each half hour between 8.30am and 1pm. “Departure from station” was stated for 14 parked cars in zone 5 at 10.30am, 13 at 3pm, 11 at 4pm, 9 at 6.30pm and 8 at 7pm. Paragraph 2.16 of the Transport Assessment states that these documents in appendix 2 demonstrate a clear demand for additional parking to be provided at the station.
- 6.11 What is evident is that there is parking associated with the station in zones 4 and 5. However, the 3 cars parked in zone 5 between 8.30 until 1pm would have been able to

park at the station at 8.30am when 9 spaces were available. The cars observed in zone 5 at 6.30pm and 7pm would have been able to park at the station at that time (although they may have been parked all day as part of the 14 vehicles observed from 10.30am. At 10.30am there wouldn't have been capacity for all of them). The remainder of cars parked on roads between 10.30am to 4.30pm wouldn't all have been able to park at the station from the time they were observed. This seems to amount to 14 vehicles, although there was some capacity at the station car park between 10.30am to 4.30pm.

- 6.12 There is evidence therefore that a proportion of users of the station who park on the roads in the surrounding area out of choice. On street parking is assumed to be free of charge. Parking charges at Mortimer Station taken from the Great Western Railway website are quoted as £3.40 per day, £17 per week, £62 per month, £185 for 3 months and £620 per annum. So cost may be a factor for those choosing not to use the station car park. It is not known what the proposed car park charges would be, and it would not meet the tests of the National Planning Policy Framework to apply a condition relating to parking fees.
- 6.13 The suitability of the zones for on street parking isn't provided. Nevertheless the levels of on street parking observed associated with the station are not considered evidence to justify a local need for an additional 150 space car park. The Highway Authority remains concerned that provision of such a car park would draw in additional traffic from further afield to utilise the car park.
- 6.14 The proposed car park of 150 spaces and the existing provision would take the total to nearly 200 spaces. This would be a similar level of car parking to that being provided for Network Rail as part of the redevelopment at Market Street, Newbury, which is an urban area and a transport hub. Green Park Station will have a 200 space multi-storey car park to improve accessibility and connectivity to Green Park Business Park which is a large employment area and in proximity to Madejski Stadium in Reading and also designed as a transport hub. Theale station has 215 parking spaces which is a rural service centre with nearby protected employment areas.
- 6.15 As Mortimer Station is in a rural area outside of a settlement boundary it is difficult to concur that 200 parking spaces meet an identified local need. The Statement of Community Involvement states that a third of the catchment residents were targeted for the survey. It states the catchment as being postcodes RG7 1, RG7 2, and RG7 3. Postcode RG7 1AA is out of district in Wokingham and will be nearly a kilometre closer to the station being developed at Green Park than Mortimer. Burghfield is a smaller village under the settlement hierarchy of policy ADPP1 and will also be closer to Green Park or Theale than Mortimer. Burghfield Common is a rural service centre and roughly equi-distant to Theale and Mortimer station.
- 6.16 It would seem therefore that geographically Mortimer Station would primarily serve Mortimer, a rural service centre under policy ADPP1, to a certain extent Burghfield Common, and the local environs thereabout. Policy ADPP6 notes that this area of the District has more limited services and poorer transport connections such that lower growth and development is proposed for this area. The protected employment areas in this part of the district are closer to Aldermaston and Theale which have their own stations.
- 6.17 Where the land is not within the ownership of the train station operator and justification for the car park would be based on an identified need for additional parking specifically for the station it is important the use of the car park for this purpose is secured. As such were a car park in this location to be considered acceptable a planning obligation would be sought to tie the car park to be available for users of Mortimer Station.

- 6.18 Whilst the principle of additional car parking at Mortimer station is provided by policy IS3 it does not specify the amount or allocate land. The supporting documents submitted with the application indicate additional demand but do not translate into a daily quantifiable demand. The nature of Mortimer as rural service centre without the employment base of other rural service centres in this part of the District do not evidence the local need for a station car park totalling 200 spaces, comparable with the provision at known urban areas and transport hubs. As such the proposal is considered contrary to policies ADPP1 and ADPP6.

Character and appearance

- 6.19 Core Strategy Policies ADPP1, CS14 and CS19 (which includes heritage assets) apply, as well as the Quality Design SPD. The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan also outlines a number of strategies that relate to character and appearance which have informed the policies and policy GD6 relates specifically to landscape. The strategy states that the site selection and design for additional station car parking will conform to all relevant policies in the plan.
- 6.20 The site is in proximity to areas of archaeological interest, The Council's Archaeologist has been consulted on the application. They advise that archaeological reports received since 2008 indicate the presence of later prehistoric or Roman cropmark features about 100m to the north. Whilst the 19th century railway line and bridge will have created some disturbance they nevertheless request a condition for an archaeological watching brief so any remains on site can be properly recorded.
- 6.21 Due to the proximity of the site to the Grade II* listed Mortimer Station a heritage impact assessment was requested. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF says that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and policy CS19 requires the conservation and where appropriate the enhancement of heritage assets and their settings. Historic England were consulted on the application but had no comments to make.
- 6.22 The Council's Conservation Officer considers the impact of the development on the setting of the listed buildings to be acceptable. They note there will be an impact from the partial removal of some of the tree and hedge cover that separates the site from the listed buildings by reducing the existing verdant back-cloth and partly altering the setting of the station. However, as it is relatively small scale and there will be additional planting they raise no objection.
- 6.23 The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, planning statement, plans and arboricultural impact assessment have been reviewed by a landscape consultant. They note that under the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) the site is located in the Grazeley Open Clay Lowland which is described as:
- traditional lowland mixed farming landscape divided into large scale fields bounded by hedgerows;*
- sparsely settled rural area with small villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads with high levels of relative tranquillity;*
- varied visual character, with expansive views from some vantage points across large fields enabled by low hedgerows;*
- rural landscape provides an undeveloped backdrop and setting to existing settlements.*
- 6.24 With regard to existing detractors the LCA notes the pressure for development due to the proximity to Reading and that development out of character with the local context

would detract from the rural quality, tranquillity and dark night skies. The applicant's landscape consultant notes that the LCA also notes that,

“noise and movement emanating from busy transport routes including the nearby M4, A33 and the railway line are locally intrusive in places and have a negative impact on the rural and tranquil qualities of the mostly undeveloped landscape”.

- 6.25 The applicant's landscape consultant therefore considers that where the railway is already a detracting feature that a station car park adjacent to a railway station, railway line and railway bridge could not be out of character with it. However, the LCA only refers to the railway line, it does not specifically mention the station at Mortimer or its car park.
- 6.26 With regard to views the Council's landscape consultant considers that the site is only visible from Station Road and from upstairs windows of the dwellings on Station Road and Keepers Cottage in the summer. There is little inter-visibility between the station and the site due to the trees and shrubs between them and where the station is at a lower level within a slight cutting. They note the site is set within an open rural landscape outside of the settlement of Stratfield Mortimer. They consider the key landscape issues to be the impact on the setting, gateway and approach into Stratfield Mortimer village and the impact on the landscape character of the area.
- 6.27 The applicant's landscape consultant notes that the dwellings along Station Road have no right to a view. They also consider that there will be greater inter-visibility between the site and the railway in the winter months and that the Council's landscape consultant has failed to consider this. However, the Council's landscape consultant notes that the railway is within a cutting. From the submitted plan on the details for the proposed steps and ramps from the proposed car park to the platform there is a drop in ground level between 1 and 1.8 metres.
- 6.28 The Council's landscape consultant assesses that the proposal would be low-rise development of urban character in a rural area and that there will be a significant adverse effect on the landscape character of the site. The impact of a large-scale urbanising development is not considered possible to successfully mitigate; that there will also be views of the car park replacing a local rural view which contributes to the sense of leaving the village of Stratfield Mortimer into a more rural landscape.
- 6.29 The Council's landscape consultant considers the site to be within a rural approach and for this approach to be adversely affected by the proposal. They consider the village to be a linear patterned settlement developed along The Street and its character includes intermittent rows of dwellings interspersed with fields with no defined edge to the settlement. Under 3.1 of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan it states that *“all roads coming into Stratfield Mortimer pass through either open farmland or woodland, thus all approaches to the parish are rural”*. The objective of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan to avoid creeping urbanisation and maintain rural approaches to the parish is therefore considered not to have been met.
- 6.30 The applicant's landscape consultant conversely considers that the site is on the edge of the village and therefore closely linked to it and that the existing railway station is already a significant feature in the landscape.
- 6.31 Overall the Council's landscape consultant assesses the site as part of an arable field forming part of a wider rural landscape contributing to the setting of Stratfield Mortimer and rural approach to it along Station Road. The proposed landscaping is not considered by them to contribute to mitigating the view of parked cars from the more sensitive locations of the southern side of Station Road bridge and the row of dwellings on the opposite side of Station Road. The band of tree planting to the southern side of the car park would provide a long term landscape feature of value but is not considered by them to compensate for the size, scale and urban character of the car park. Planting adjacent

to Station Road on the southern side of the bridge they are also concerned would be to the top of a slope that will be dry and not grow well, whilst planting at a lower level under the existing tree would not provide long term screening.

- 6.32 The applicant's landscape consultant reiterates that the proposal includes 0.4ha of woodland and other planting including 0.5km of native hedge planting and that in their opinion it would significantly (if not fully) mitigate the adverse landscape effects. However, it's not clear if this only refers to the planting shown within the red line. Any shown outside of the red line cannot be taken into account as it cannot be conditioned to be provided. Extract of landscape strategy plan below:



- 6.33 The applicant's landscape consultant considers the resultant views of the site to be less sensitive and for those passing the site the views to be of short duration. They consider the effect on the character of the approach to the village to be very limited, and the changes to the landscape pattern to be localised. There is also disagreement on planting to the slope towards the bridge on Station Road that it would provide screening and would not be limited in growth.
- 6.34 The Council's landscape consultant concludes that the proposal is contrary to policy CS14 for being unsympathetic to the surrounding rural landscape and its setting, contrary to policy CS19 for not respecting the existing form of settlement in the landscape and eroding the rural landscape of an undeveloped backdrop on the approach to the village. It is also contrary to the strategy of the neighbourhood plan which seeks to maintain a compact village and avoid urbanising creep, and maintain rural approaches to the parish.
- 6.35 The existing railway station is set at a lower ground level than the site such that it is not particularly visible from the site or further away along Station Road. The station is not specifically mentioned as a detracting feature in the landscape in the LCA. The settlement pattern of Stratfield Mortimer is predominantly along The Street such that the row of houses along Station Road near the site are not considered within or immediately adjacent to the edge of the village. The site is therefore considered to be part of a rural approach to the village. Much of the proposed planting shown to the south around the proposed car park is actually outside the red line of the application and there is no blue line on the location plan. As such it would not be possible to secure by condition any landscaping within these areas which are proposed as part of the landscape mitigation for the development. Overall therefore it is considered that the Council's landscape consultant's conclusion is correct that the proposal is contrary to policies CS14, CS19 and the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Quality of Life

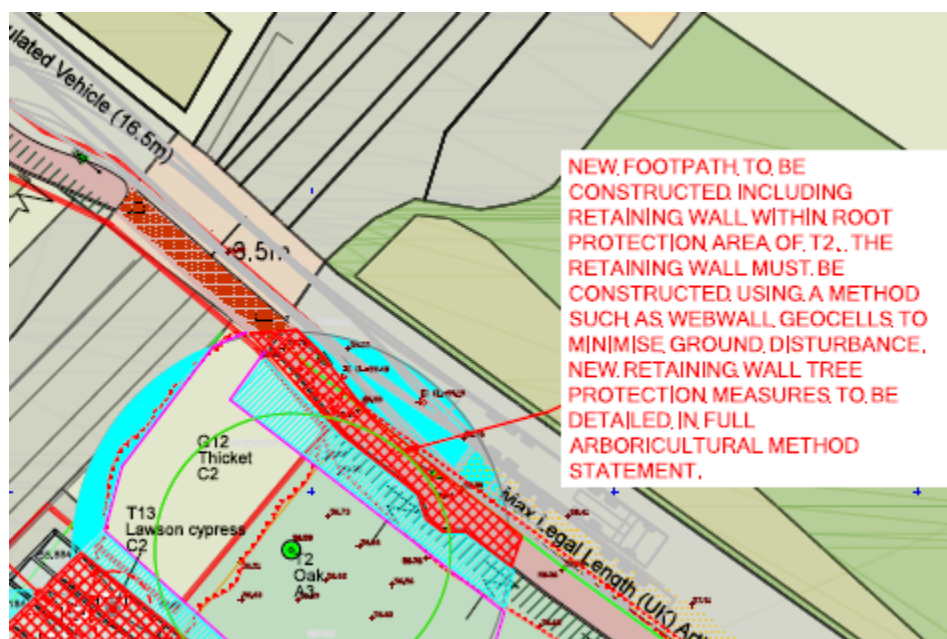
- 6.36 Policies CS14 of the Core Strategy and the Policies OVS.5 and OVS.6 of the Saved Local Plan (relating to noise and environmental pollution respectively) and the Quality Design SPD are applicable. Policy GD4 of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan outlines that street lighting should only be provided for security with low level lighting for pedestrians. There are properties to the other side of Station Road which would be affected by the development. Environmental Health and Transport Policy have not provided comments on the application.
- 6.37 With regard to potential noise impacts policy OVS.6 states that measures to minimising adverse impacts of noise generation include location, design, layout and operation of development and have regard to matters including existing sources of noise, and the need for appropriate sound insulation measures.
- 6.38 Details of lighting have not been submitted as part of the proposal and so a full assessment cannot be made. There is a street light either side of the bridge on Station Road, but otherwise there is none along Station Road in-front of the row of houses. The proposed footway link onto Station Road comes out opposite No. 1 on Station Road in proximity to the existing street light. The proposed traffic lights would not be directed towards the front elevation of the dwelling and No. 1 is set back from the road by approximately 13m.
- 6.39 The vehicle access point would be opposite No. 5 on Station Road. That dwelling is set 10 metres back from the road. There will be both car head lights from vehicles exiting the car park and noise from vehicles accessing and leaving the car park. The main car park is set away from the properties where it runs at right angles to Station Road. The internal road would run parallel to Station Road and would be set 10 metres from the road. Planting is proposed between the internal road and Station Road which will provide some screening both visual and acoustic. Within the car park itself therefore the noise impact is not considered to be materially harmful.

Biodiversity

- 6.40 Policy CS17 requires biodiversity to be conserved and enhanced and the B2 and B3 policies on biodiversity in the Stratfield Mortimer Development Plan also apply. An extended phase 1 ecological assessment has been submitted and reviewed by the Council's Ecologist.
- 6.41 The submitted survey identifies the loss of a small area of native hedgerow which can be compensated for and increased overall as part of the landscaping proposals. The boundaries may be used by bats foraging and commuting but are to be retained. Lighting is to be minimised in these areas and specification on the type of lighting that would have least impact on bats is identified in the assessment. The small area of hedgerow clearance should be avoided during bird nesting season. Measures for vegetation clearance as part of the development are outlined as a precautionary to avoid impact on reptiles within the field margins. Biodiversity enhancements identified in the assessment are additional bird and bat boxes and native species tree and shrub planting.
- 6.42 The Council's Ecologist agrees with most of the identified impacts and mitigation. There is a request for the bird and bat boxes to be adhered to the back of the existing building for more secure fixings this is not considered appropriate for the listed building. Details of fixings could be secured as part of a condition. Conditions are otherwise identified by the Council's Ecologist for construction environmental management plan and a landscape environmental management plan, and a lighting plan. It is considered that with these conditions the development would be in accordance with policy CS17.

Tree Protection

- 6.43 Policy CS19 requires landscape character to be conserved and enhanced with the natural, cultural and functional components of its character considered as a whole. Part of the landscape is the green infrastructure of trees and hedges which are a potential constraint on site for the proposed development. The submission includes tree protection details of trees to be retained and an arboricultural method statement. The Council's Tree Officer has been consulted on the application. It is noted that the arboricultural impact assessment states it is preliminary with details of drainage, footpath construction, services and contractors' facilities to be prepared at a later stage.
- 6.44 They note that impacts of the development are the removal of around 40m of roadside hedge, removal of some trees and thicket, pruning of a tree, construction of new access ramps between two trees, construction of the car park and access road near four trees that will require a change in ground levels, and a type of green retaining wall construction alongside the proposed new footway that would be within the root protection area of a tree.
- 6.45 The arboricultural impact assessment notes the difference in ground levels is approximately 1.4m between the field and station platform. The footpath to link towards the bridge on Station Road will require construction of a retaining wall for structural support although details have not been prepared the change in ground level 2.2 and 2.8m high. Please see extract from plans:



- 6.46 As these are specialist matters a project arboriculturalist will be required which can be secured by condition. Post and rail fence protection to the root protection areas of five trees is requested to prevent soil compaction from vehicles and pedestrians which can also be secured by condition. A landscaping condition for landscaping planting mitigation is also required.
- 6.47 The Council's Tree Officer notes that the group of semi-mature planted trees and hedgerow to the northwest of the red line where the new footway in the extract from the plans above is proposed to connect to the existing car park were not considered. Some loss of the trees is expected here and further clarification on these impacts has been requested. The arboricultural impact assessment states that the new footpath will run through an area of trees to the west side of the road bridge and that the trees in this area have not been surveyed. As there are considered to be other issues that cannot be overcome the additional clarification has not been sought or provided on this.

- 6.48 The conditions the Tree Officer otherwise recommends are tree retention and protection, arboricultural method statement and supervision, and details of landscaping, with a condition on details to be submitted on the matters the arboricultural impact assessment notes it does not include.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.49 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and just below a hectare in size. As such a flood risk assessment is not required. Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy requires all development to manage surface water in a sustainable manner through the implementation of sustainable drainage methods. The Council also has an adopted SPD on sustainable drainage. Policy GD3 in the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan also relates to flooding.
- 6.50 The Local Lead Flood Authority have been consulted on the application. They accepted the calculations provided for the proposed attenuation pond. On the drainage strategy more natural ways of removing pollutants such as swales or wetland rather than the proposed oil interceptors were requested along with further details on the detention basin to show that it maximises biodiversity/habitat/amenity benefits. An amended surface water drainage strategy plan was submitted along with calculations.
- 6.51 The latest comments on the amended drainage strategy are that the whilst the swales provide green water quality benefits the swale to the southern boundary before the scrape pond appears not to have a suitable outfall and an update is required to show the swale discharging to the pond. The scrape pond would overflow to the attenuation basin but isn't shown in the strategy and should also be utilised as an overflow for the attenuation basin at times of high water level in addition to the pond overflow to overflow to the attenuation basin which is shown.
- 6.52 Maintenance work to the ditch the final swale would discharge to is required to maintain its upkeep and ensure it remains operative for the lifetime of the development. The ditch runs across what is shown as the access to the site and should be reconsidered as it would need to divert under the road and requires an ordinary watercourse consent.
- 6.53 There has not been time available to request these amendments from the applicant prior to bring the application to committee on the date agreed with the applicant. As such there is currently insufficient information submitted to confirm that the drainage strategy complies with policy CS16 and the Sustainable Drainage SPD and can be conditioned.

Highways

- 6.54 A Transport Assessment which includes a Road Safety Audit and subsequent Technical Note have been submitted and the Council's Highways have been consulted. Policies CS13 and TRANS.1 are of relevance and the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan policy GD2 requires development to provide direct, safe and convenient pedestrian access to community facilities, minimal street furniture.
- 6.55 The Highway Authority notes that the access entrance would be 6m wide onto Station Road with visibility splays of 2.4m back and 59m to the right and 56m to the left. The pedestrian ramps from the car park to the southbound station platform would be 2m wide. The footway proposed along Station Road would be 2m wide except over the bridge where it would be a 1.8m wide painted surface. The road over the bridge would be narrowed from 5.2m to 3.5m and traffic lights installed for one-way shuttle operation that has been subject to the road safety audit, modelled, and the impact on nearby junctions considered. All matters are accepted by the Highway Authority with the exception of the need for a car park of the size proposed, the proposed footway along Station Road, and insufficient information on the impact of the footway into the station.

The need for a car park of the size proposed has been covered in the section on the principle of development.

- 6.56 The proposed footway is considered unsuitable. The gradient of the footway would be 6% or 1 in 16 to the west and in places 7% or 1 in 7 to the east. This exceeds the recommended maximum of 5% or 1 in 20 and is considered unacceptable. The originally proposed footway would be a painted surface. A kerb is now proposed as additional separation of vehicles from pedestrians to a height of 50mm. As vehicles could easily mount a kerb of this height 125mm would be sought, but is understood to not be achievable due to it causing further the footway gradient issues. The Highway Authority therefore recommend refusal on these grounds for being contrary to policy GD2 and CS13 the supporting text to which policy states that road safety is a key consideration with a particular focus given to safety of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.
- 6.57 The Highways Authority notes the objection received that the proposed footway would reduce the carriageway width at the access into Mortimer Station such that large vehicles would be unable to turn into/out of the access. It is noted that there are business uses off the Mortimer Station access. Due to the lateness of the consultation response it has not been possible to request additional information on this from the applicant. Whilst the matter may be capable of being overcome insufficient information has currently been provided and is a reason for refusal at this stage.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 7.1 The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan supports an extension to the car park at Mortimer Station. It does not allocate land or specify the level of car parking required. The proposal would provide a benefit to the local community. Where the site is in the open countryside only appropriate limited development will be allowed focused on addressing identified needs under policy ADPP1. Whilst a demand for additional car parking for Mortimer station has been demonstrated the submission is not considered to justify a need for an additional 150 spaces, resulting in a total capacity similar to that provided at urban transport hubs. As such the proposal is not considered appropriate limited development in the countryside and not acceptable in principle which weighs significantly against the proposal.
- 7.2 The provision of access from the southbound platform to the site and onto Station Road for those unable to cross over the railway line via the existing footbridge steps could provide a significant benefit and potentially address an identified accessibility issue for station users. However, the proposed footway along Station Road is not considered accessible due to the steep gradient over the bridge. Furthermore, the proposed 50mm kerb edge to the footway adjacent to the narrowed highway over the bridge is not considered to provide sufficient safety for pedestrians and disabled users where the kerb could easily be mounted by a vehicle. As such the benefit cannot be realised, weighing against the proposal.
- 7.3 The size and scale of the proposal is considered to result in an urbanising impact on the landscape which is a rural greenfield site and part of the rural approach to the village of Stratfield Mortimer. The proposed landscaping is not considered to mitigate this impact and the landscaping within the field around the development would be outside of the red line. This weighs significantly against the proposal.
- 7.4 There is a minor adverse impact on the amenity of the residents of Station Road. Where insufficient information has been provided to ensure the drainage strategy would meet policy requirements, and additional clarification is required on the tree impact alongside the proposed footway towards the bridge on Station Road these are considered to weigh

slightly against the proposal. If these matters had been overcome during the application and met the policy requirements these would have neutral weight in the balance.

- 7.5 Having taken account of all the relevant policy considerations and other material considerations referred to above, it is considered that the application fails to comply with the development plan. In the balance the adverse impacts of the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The application is recommended for refusal.

8. Full Recommendation

- 8.1 To delegate to the Head of Development and Planning to REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the reasons listed below.

Refusal Reasons

1. **Identified Need**

The proposed development is large in scale and size for 150 car parking spaces and on nearly a hectare of site area. It would not be appropriate limited development in the countryside and would not address an identified need for additional car parking to serve Mortimer station. As such the proposed development is contrary to policies ADPP1 and ADPP6 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. **Landscape**

The proposed development would have an urbanising impact on the landscape character and appearance of the rural area. The proposal would erode the rural landscape which provides an undeveloped back drop and setting to the rural approach to the village of Stratfield Mortimer. As such the proposal is contrary to policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017, the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. **Footway**

The proposed footway along Station Road is unsuitable for pedestrians including disabled persons using the proposed car park and train station. This is due to the proposed gradient in places and the footway design over the existing bridge. The proposal would therefore adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic contrary to Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. **Drainage**

Insufficient information has been submitted to ensure the proposed drainage strategy can be achieved. The swale to the southern boundary does not have an outfall and is not shown to discharge to the pond. The scrape pond is not shown to overflow to the attenuation basin and should also be used as an overflow for the basin. Maintenance details are required for the existing ditch to remain operative for the development. The ditch would be required to be diverted under the proposed internal road as part of the development. As such the proposed development is contrary to policy CS16 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, the Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Drainage and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. **Footway into Mortimer Station**

Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate the proposed footway off Station Road and into the access for Mortimer Station would not reduce the carriageway such that turning would not be possible for large vehicles. As such the proposed development would adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic contrary to Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

1. In attempting to determine the application in a way that can foster the delivery of sustainable development, the local planning authority has approached this decision in a positive way having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to try to secure high quality appropriate development. In this application there has been a need to balance conflicting considerations, and the local planning authority has also attempted to work proactively with the applicant to find a solution to the problems with the development; however, an acceptable solution to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area could not be found.