

# Strategic Plan

**2014 – 2017**

**First strategic plan for the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field.**

**The objective may change following further consultation with the beneficiaries of the Charity.**

**Finalised and agreed by the Trustees on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

**Charity 300207**

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## Executive Summary

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The Alfred Palmer Memorial Field (The APMF) is a 6.5 acre public open space located in the Parish of Stratfield Mortimer. The APMF is held in trust "*as a public ground for the resort and recreation of and as playgrounds for or otherwise for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parishes of Mortimer and Wokefield.*"

In 2013/2014 both Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council and beneficiaries of the charity complained to the Charity Commission that the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field Trust was not fulfilling its charitable outcomes of providing a public open space for the residents of Mortimer and Wokefield, and it was not adhering to Charity law or Charity Commission good practice guidelines.

The Charity Commission took these complaints extremely seriously and commenced an investigation into the charity, ultimately upholding the complaints. The Trust was then faced with an ultimatum; get the Charity back on track with the aid of their allocated Charity Commission case worker or the Charity Commission would intervene and take over the Trust, possibly selling the land; losing it as a public open space.

Since 2014 the Trustees have been working with their Charity Commission case worker and its beneficiaries to get the Trust back on track. This document gives an overview of the background, actions to date and then looks at the Trusts 3 year strategic plan.

*“...as a public ground for the resort and recreation of and as playgrounds for or otherwise for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parishes of Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield.”*

## Background Information

### History of Alfred Palmer

Dr. Alfred Palmer (1852-1936) was part of Reading's famous Palmer family, proprietors of the Huntley and Palmer biscuit manufacturers. He lived in Wokefield Park, regularly attending church services at Mortimer St. Mary's church, where he is now buried with his wife.

In 1939, Alfred Palmer's five grandchildren purchased a field in Mortimer from the Benyon estate for £230. They stipulated that the field would be held in trust, in his memory, as a public ground for the resort and recreation of and as playgrounds for or otherwise for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parishes of Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield.

### Location and size

The Field is 6.5 acres. It is located off the West End Road, Mortimer.

It has the following boundaries:

- North:** borders Stephens Firs and the Scout Hut
- East:** borders back gardens of houses in Stephens Close.
- South:** borders West End Road
- West:** borders Fairfield Caravan Park

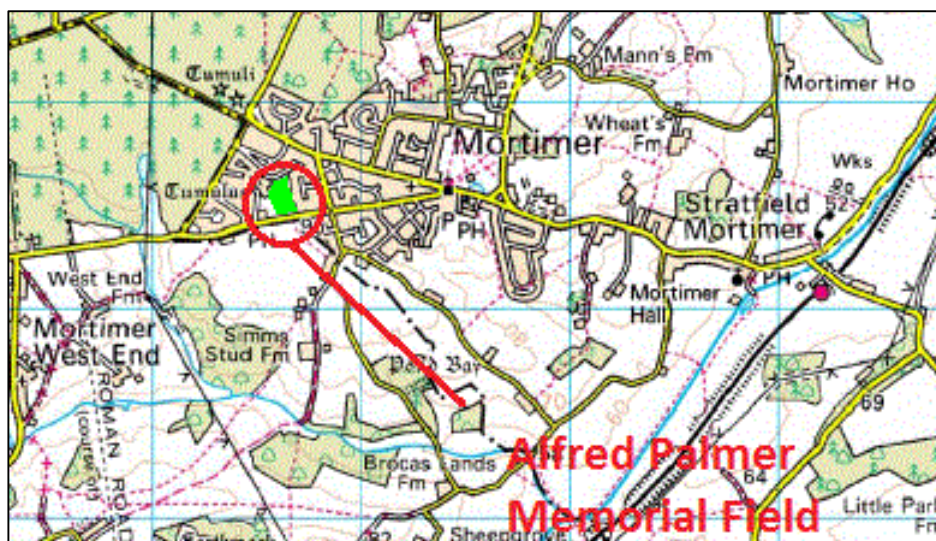


Figure 1 - Reproduced from Ordnance Survey map data by permission of Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2013.

## Complaints upheld by the Charity Commission

The Charity was found to **have not**

- Acted responsibly and only in the interests of the charity with particular emphasis on the loss of control of the APMF.
- Followed the law or the rules in the charity's governing documents and Charity Commission guidelines.
- Made well-informed decisions, taking advice when needed.
- Ensured that they had the money needed to maintain and promote the field and to ensure that the charity remained solvent. Had not ensured monies due to the charity were received and spent correctly.
- Followed the law regarding the accounts it has sent to the Charity Commission.
- Been unbiased and had allowed personal views and prejudices to affect their conduct as Trustees.
- Exercised an appropriate degree of care in administering the charity which allowed the Charity to be brought into disrepute.
- Protected the reputation of the charity thereby placing it at undue risk.
- Been accountable and met their legal obligations in order to promote public trust and confidence.
- Had proper controls including allowing fraud to be perpetrated in the name of the charity.
- Protected the amenity for the sole use of the beneficiaries.

## The Charities financial situation

The current Trustees have been working hard to deal with the serious financial challenges of this charity. Previously the charity's only income had been approximately £100 per annum from MFC under their lease agreement. The Trust had not been ensuring that monies due to the Charity were received; in any event this was not enough of an income to keep the charity solvent.

The last grant from the SMPC was received in 2012 for £650.

At the end of 2014 the Charity offered Mortimer Football Club a hire agreement and exclusivity of the first pitch area (during the football season). The Mortimer Youth Football Club were offered a similar hire agreement. This new agreement provides a maximum monthly income of £100 per month to a minimum monthly income of £4.

## **Trustees' Objectives for 3 years**

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### **2014**

- To understand and act in accordance to Charity law and Charity Commission guidelines in all matters.
- To start a consultation process with all relevant parties.
- To raise the profile of the Trust and the Field.
- To work with the Charity Commission.
- To establish Trust control over the field.
- Essential maintenance of field

### **2015**

- To continue consultations with all relevant parties.
- To continue to raise the profile of the Trustees and the Field.
- To continue to work with the Charity Commission.
- To formulate and start implementation of a strategic plan.
- To formalise and implement hire agreements.
- To investigate funding opportunities and further revenue streams.
- To develop and maintain the field where appropriate.

### **2016**

- To provide up to date and relevant communication.
- To continue to work with the Charity Commission.
- To revise the Strategic plan alongside the Community Plan refresh information and produce amended strategic plan for the APMF.
- Improve accessibility of the APMF and encourage new users.

## Trustees' Work During 2014

To understand and act in accordance to Charity law and Charity Commission guidelines in all matters.

Actions	Status
Ensure Trustees and volunteers are insured.	<b>Completed:</b> After investigation Public Liability and Trustee indemnity was purchased for 2014/2015.
Ensure that the financial situation was understood, including revenue streams and that the money could be accessed.	<b>Completed:</b> Reviewed and documented financial situation. <b>Completed:</b> Created a new bank account for trust and monies transferred into it.
Review and change the governing documents to clarify the election process.	<b>Completed:</b> In Q1, 2015.
To produce a full report about the current situation of the Charity. Trust to review situation going forward.	<b>Completed:</b> The Trustees held a "back to basics" meeting where all of the governing documents and the feedback from the public/user meetings was discussed. Trustees in agreement with past issues and future actions. Charity Commission informed.
Ensuring all Charity Commission information updated.	<b>Completed:</b> Charity Commission website updated.
Ensure Trustees were elected correctly and that the charity was constitutionally correct.	<b>Completed:</b> Third Trustee elected at Annual Parish Meeting 2014. Confirmation received from the Charity Commission that the Charity was now constitutionally correct.

**To start a consultation process with all relevant parties.**

Actions	Status
To consult with the beneficiaries of the charity.	<b>Completed:</b> An open public meeting for the beneficiaries took place in July 2014.
To consult with users of the APMF.	<b>Completed:</b> Meetings were held with Mortimer Football Club and the Scouts.
To consult with residents on the perimeter of the APMF.	<b>Completed:</b> A meeting was held with residents that live around the perimeter of the field. Fairfields were approached several times and invited to a meeting, but chose not to partake.
Inspect and assess priority maintenance on the APMF.	<b>Completed:</b> List compiled for priority maintenance.

**To raise the profile of the Trust and the Field.**

Actions	Status
Provide communication mediums	<p><b>Completed:</b> Use of social media to raise awareness.</p> <p><b>Completed:</b> Not knowing who the Trustees were, let alone being able to contact them, was one of the most highlighted concerns which the Trustees collated from the consultation meetings. The Trustees have created an email address, and a Facebook profile.</p>
Hold consultation meetings.	<b>Completed:</b> See above objective.
Initiate open dialogue with Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	<b>Ongoing:</b> SMPC are kept updated with progress.



**To work with the Charity Commission.**

Actions	Status
Compile all available documentation	<b>Completed:</b> (as far as possible). This has been significantly hampered by the previous SMPC Trustee losing all of the paperwork.
Provide evidence to the Charity Commission that the Trust is fulfilling its duty of care and getting the charity back on track.	<b>Ongoing:</b> Since 2014 a continuing flow of evidence has been forwarded to the Charity Commission to show that the Trustees are working within their remit and discharging their legal duties and responsibilities to the satisfaction of the Charity Commission. Regular Trustees meetings are taking place.
Ensuring all Charity Commission information updated.	<b>Completed:</b> Charity Commission website updated. <b>Ongoing:</b> Financial information being compiled to be entered onto Charity Commission website.

**To establish Trust control over the field.**

Actions	Status
The Charity Commission have suggested that the current Trustees <i>"...attempt to exert a controlling influence over the [field] ...revise current policies and procedures... to reduce the likelihood of the Charity being exposed to risk of such things occurring in the future"</i> .	<b>Completed:</b> Extensive investigation into the relationship between the trust and their tenant, uncovered serious causes for concern. It was decided that the charity's best interest would be better safeguarded if a more clear-cut relationship was established. All organised group users of the field will be arranged by a hire agreement. This prevents blurred boundaries, but at the same time preserves football on the APMF, which has been a massive part of this field's history and will remain so.  Clarification given to MFC that it is not their responsibility to maintain and make decisions on behalf of the Charity or the beneficiaries; that this the purpose of the Trust.

**Essential maintenance of field**

Actions	Status
To consult with contractors and local experts regarding the maintenance requirements for the field	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Obtaining quotations for grass cutting, and hedge trimming proving difficult. Volunteers and Trustees made a start on cutting back the hedge on the southern boundary and strimming the overgrown edges of the field.</p> <p><b>Ongoing:</b> Trustees were successful in getting C&amp;D Facilities to cut the field while they were engaged by the SMPC to maintain the fairground. However the funds of the Trust do not make this a viable option in the short term. Trust to consult with SMPC for assistance.</p>
Priority works to dangerous trees fronting West End Road to make them safe.	<p><b>Completed:</b> Contractor engaged to make trees safe further to a donation from MVP Fun Day.</p>

## Trustees' Work During 2015

To continue consultations with all relevant parties.

Actions	Status
Consultations with MFC	<b>Ongoing:</b> There have been some significant and difficult decisions to make involving Mortimer Football Club. Initially due to misunderstandings the relationship floundered. However, initial mediated sessions have resulted in improving the relationship between Trustees and MFC executive committee and agreements and understandings are being reached.
Consultations with the beneficiaries	<b>Outstanding:</b> Further face to face public consultations planned for the Autumn.
Consultations with directly impacted residents	<b>Ongoing:</b> Before any changes are made, such as replacement perimeter fencing, car parking, these residents will be consulted.
To work with MFC and ascertain their needs to ensure that the APMF meets the requirements to remain a suitable Step 7 ground.	<b>Ongoing:</b> Mediated meetings are continuing. It has been agreed that non-essential fixtures will be removed or replaced to open up the field for the beneficiaries. Requirements for a new pavilion are also to be discussed.
APMF included in NDP questionnaire	<b>Ongoing:</b> This was done but the information has not yet been included in strategic plan.

### To continue to raise the profile of the Trustees and the Field.

Actions	Status
To purchase two AMPF signs and place at the main entrances to the field.	<b>Ongoing:</b> Funds secured from West Berkshire Council. Match funding to be raised via Greenham Common Find me a grant scheme. Signs to be ordered.
To arrange for a notice board	<b>Outstanding:</b> SMPC to be approached to see if a joint notice board can be purchased.
Create an identity	<b>Completed:</b> A new logo was created for the Trust and is used on all publicity material.
Further communication mediums created.	<b>Ongoing:</b> A basic website was created and a fundraising page. The website is currently being updated and expanded to better reflect the Charity and to allow documents to be uploaded.
Ensure involvement in the Community Plan refresh.	<b>Completed:</b> The Chair will be involved in the Community Plan Refresh.

### To work with the Charity Commission.

Actions	Status
Regular Trustees meetings	<b>Ongoing:</b> The Trustees continue to meet regularly with all meetings being minuted.
New Trustee to replace David Gardiner (hereditary Trustee)	<b>Completed:</b> Regrettably the Palmer family Trustee decided to retire this year. <b>Prior</b> to his retirement and with notice to the Charity Commission, the Trustees unanimously decided to change the governing document relating to the election of Trustees. Each Trustee now serves a three year term, which is staggered. One Trustee remains

	as the gift of the Chairman of SMPC, one is publicly elected and the third is now co-opted. All must be residents of Mortimer, Wokefield or Mortimer West End.
Advisors appointed	<b>Completed:</b> Two advisors were appointed; a sports advisor and a maintenance advisor to ensure the charity receives impartial and expert advice.
Continued liaison with the AMPF case worker at the Charity Commission	<b>Ongoing:</b> We continue to be in regular contact with our case worker who is happy with the progress of the Charity.
Ensuring all Charity Commission information updated.	<b>Ongoing:</b> The Charity Commission website to be updated with new Trustee and financial information for 2015/2016.

### To formulate and start implementation of a strategic plan.

Actions	Status
Create strategic plan	<b>Ongoing:</b> The plan has existed in a "draft" format since 2014 due to more pressing and urgent issues which took priority.
Publish strategic plan.	<b>Ongoing:</b> The plan will be presented to Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council on 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2015. Once our website has been updated it will be uploaded.

### To formalise and implement hire agreements.

Actions	Status
Hire agreements to be completed and implemented for existing and new users of the APMF.	<b>Completed:</b> Mortimer Football Club Mens and Mortimer Football Youth are using the field under the terms of their hire agreements.

### Investigate funding opportunities and further revenue streams.

Actions	Status
Contact funding bodies both local and national	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Fund raising page set up.</p> <p>Meetings to be arranged with local suppliers of grants.</p> <p>Contact local organisations for possible sponsorship.</p>
Contact local organisations regarding their potential use of the APMF.	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> The local schools and clubs are to be approached to ascertain any need or future event.</p>
Investigate eligibility for local government funding for a public open space.	<p><b>Completed:</b> Successful members bid for notice board</p> <p>Investigate SMPC help towards cost of grass cutting.</p> <p>Investigate eligibility for Community Infrastructure levee.</p>

### Development and maintenance of field

Actions	Status
To make the trees aligning West End Road safe.	<p><b>Completed:</b> Mortimer Village Partnership donated part of their profits from the 2014 Fun Day to fund the tree work which was urgently needed.</p>
To maintain the APMF (except MFC's pitch) to a recreational standard	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> A contractor has been employed to grass has been cut up to the edges. SMPC are to be approached with a view to their contractor C&amp;D to cut the APMF when they cut the fairground.</p> <p>A maintenance advisor has been appointed and he, the Trustees and volunteers have been strimming the edges of the APMF.</p>

<p>To determine boundaries and ensure all boundaries are defined.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> To instruct a surveyor to determine the boundaries, including clarification of land belonging to 1<sup>st</sup> Mortimer Scouts and an assessment about the amount of encroachment by Fairfields Caravan Park.</p> <p>Perimeter fencing/hedging to be repaired/replaced with grant funding after consultation.</p> <p><b>North:</b> fencing is in a very bad state of repair. Residents are to be consulted as to what replacement fence they would like.</p> <p><b>East:</b> fencing is in bad state and much hedgerow was removed during floodlight installation. Residents to be consulted as to what replacement fence/hedgerow they would like.</p> <p><b>South:</b> Hedge very overgrown. Maintenance advisor, Trustees and volunteers have started to hard pruned and bring back under control. Woodland Trust to be approached regarding replacement hedging.</p> <p><b>West:</b> Fairfields have been notified that the boundary fence will be replaced with a solid structure in accordance with the conveyance. It may be determined that recovering land back from Fairfields would not be financially beneficial for the Trust.</p> <p>Once quotes are received, a fundraising campaign will begin.</p>
<p>To preserve and attract wildlife to the APMF.</p>	<p><b>Outstanding:</b> To assess current wildlife, suitability of the site for others and complete a wildlife management plan.</p>

**Improve accessibility of the APMF and encourage new users.**

Actions	Status
Improve accessibility to the APMF	<p><b>Outstanding:</b> Residents and users will be contacted to ascertain views about leaving the car park open between certain hours of the day (similar to the Horse &amp; Groom car park). This will help relieve the pressure of the other village car parks during certain days of the week and reinforce the purpose that this ground was left in trust for resident use.</p> <p>The above will be subject to the replacement of the current car park surface and barriers, to prevent unauthorised vehicular access onto the field.</p> <p>Replacement of pitch side barriers with removable ones.</p> <p>Replacement of floodlights with telescopic mobile floodlights.</p>
Encourage more users	<p><b>Outstanding:</b> Proactively contact clubs and other local organisations.</p> <p>Advertise the facility more extensively.</p>
Feasibility study for new Pavilion	<p><b>Outstanding:</b> Including a consultation with residents, beneficiaries and input from the Community Plan refresh.</p>



## Trustees' Work During 2016

### To provide up-to-date and relevant communication

Actions
Review consultations to be held with all relevant parties to discuss the Community Plan refresh and impact on the APMF. This will be fed into an updated strategic plan for the charity.
Other social media platforms to be investigated.
Proactively contact organisation to advertise on the APMF

### To work with the Charity Commission.

Actions
Appoint a new SMPC Trustee on a three year term.
Continue to keep the Charity commission updated.

### To revise this Strategic plan in light of the Community Plan refresh information and produce an amended plan.

Actions
Review strategic plan in light of Community Plan.
In depth strategic discussion with Mortimer Football Club.
Update Strategic plan.

## Conclusion

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As seen from this three year plan, it is our intention that the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field will become a vibrant and attractive public open space, enhancing the quality of life in Mortimer. Football will continue to play a large part in our plans, with changes and improvements being done as sensitively as possible. Ultimately, the trust has had to make some difficult and sometimes controversial decisions to ensure that it will achieve its charitable outcomes. Encouragingly, the Charity Commission is now satisfied that this charity is back on track.

The strategic plan will take time to implement. Funding is our main hurdle as we continue to improve this protected green space for its beneficiaries.

## Trustees and Advisors

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### Trustees

**Rebecca Barker** – Chair - SMPC appointed Trustee since 2013

Life-long Mortimer resident, former chair of SMPC, member of Mortimer Village Partnership, former governor of St. John's School, Trustee of Basingstoke Bluefins Swimming Club.

**Sarah Smith** – publically appointed Trustee by vote at Stratfield Mortimer Annual Parish Meeting 2014.

Mortimer resident for 8 years, mum of two young children, current manager of a family support charity in Reading and a non-practising solicitor.

**John Hannawin** – co-opted Trustee since May 2015

Mortimer resident for over 20 years, former governor of St. John's school for 8 years (4 years as the SMPC appointed governor and 2 years as Chair), current Managing Director of a local software company.

### Advisors

**Brain Strange** – sport advisor.

**Tom Maynard** – maintenance advisor.

## Main Points from the Governing Documents

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<b>Clause 6a</b>	"... a public ground for the resort and recreation of and as playgrounds for ... the benefit of the inhabitants of the parishes of Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield"
<b>Clause 6b</b>	" money generated either from income or capital is to be used for equipment and maintenance of the land, as so far is practicable allow its use to be free for all"
<b>First schedule</b>	"no house or other building shall be erected [save for a groundsman's cottage, a tool or tack shed, any building reasonably required or appropriate for a sport or game such as a swimming bath or a court for squash, racquets or badminton, a pavilion or a hall for the use of the village generally]"
<b>Fourth schedule</b>	"the Trustees may let a weekly pitch to any sports club for a season at a rent"
<b>Fourth schedule</b>	"that apart from 12 days of the year, entrance to the field should be free"
<b>Forth schedule</b>	"the land shall not be used for the discussion or exploitation of political religious or trade questions or opinions or any other matter of controversy"
<b>Fourth schedule</b>	"the Trustees may make such rules and regulations (among others) as they think fit"