

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P12/V1329/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	Full
<b>REGISTERED</b>	15 June 2012
<b>PARISH</b>	WATCHFIELD
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Simon Howell Elaine Ware
<b>APPLICANT</b>	J Knapp and Sons
<b>SITE</b>	Land Opposite Shrivenham Hundred Business Park Majors Road Watchfield
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Proposed residential development comprising of 120 units and associated parking, landscaping, amenity space and engineering works.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	31 August 2012 amended plans
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	424704/190525
<b>OFFICER</b>	David Rothery

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1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The 3.6ha site lies to the south of Majors Road, opposite the Shrivenham Hundred Business Park. The adjoining land to the east comprises a small field paddock and the rear of dwellings in Saxon Orchard. Land to the south beyond the field boundary is open space to Watchfield Folly and to the west is the Airey Neave Memorial Recreational Ground with playing fields and play equipment.
- 1.2 The main village area lies to the west on the other side of the recreation ground. Areas of Ministry of Defence housing lie south of the Folly and make up the majority of the village built up environment. Employment is provided at the business park to the north of the site and this screens the site from the main A420 route between Swindon and Oxford.
- 1.3 The site is well screened from external views and is gently sloping downwards towards the western edge with a crown at the eastern middle section. It is currently rough grass land with no active use observable other than passive recreational use such as dog walking.
- 1.4 Local facilities comprise a primary school within 400m of the site, a village hall, post office and public house in the main village to the south and west. Additional facilities lie to the east at College Farm and provide a supermarket, a public house, and small range of retail and service businesses.
- 1.5 A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This is a full detailed proposal for residential development of the site for 120 dwellings. The development would take vehicular access from Majors Road to the north and would include roads, footpaths and associated parking areas, landscaping, amenity space, open space and the use of some open land for a swale to store water during periods of heavy and prolonged rainfall. Pedestrian access would be available to the open space and footpath / cycleway routes to the south of the site.
- 2.2 The proposed mix of dwelling units is as amended as follows  
1-bedroom = 4 units (all affordable)

2-bedroomed = 33 units (18 affordable and 15 market)  
3-bedroomed = 65 units (22 affordable and 43 market)  
4-bedroomed = 18 units ( 4 affordable and 14 market)

A total of 48 properties to be secured as affordable housing (40%). Across the 3.6ha site the 120 dwelling units would produce a density of 33 dwellings per hectare. Some 31% of the dwellings are two-bedroom properties or less.

2.3 In support of the application the following documents have been submitted:

- Planning Supporting Statement (June 2012 - Boyer)
- Design and Access Statement Addendum (August 2012 - Boyer)
- Landscape and Visual Assessment (June 2012 - HDA)
- Tree Survey Report / Implications Assessment (June 2012 – HDA)
- Ecological Assessment - Preliminary (May 2009 - HDA)
- Bat Survey Report (November 2011 – HDA)
- Badger Survey Report (November 2011 – HDA)
- Doormouse Survey Report (December 2011 – HDA)
- Reptile Survey Report (November 2011 – HDA)
- Ecological Summary Paper (June 2012 – HDA)
- Transport Assessment (June 2012 – SMA)
- Travel Plan – Interim (June 2012 – SMA)
- Archaeological Evaluation (December 2011 - CA)
- Heritage Assessment – Desk Based (October 2011 - CA)
- Utility Appraisal - Preliminary (June 2012 -SMA)
- Updated Affordable Housing Statement (August 2012 – Boyer)
- Code for Sustainable Homes Pre-Assessment (June 2012 – Sol Environmental)
- Energy Statement (June 2012 – Sol Environmental)
- Statement of Community Involvement (June 2012 – Boyer)

2.4 The proposal is a large major development and is contrary to the policies of the development plan. The proposal has been publicised on this basis.

2.5 The applicants have been in discussion with council officers and others to agree a level of contribution towards off-site services which this proposal (through the increase in population and the activities they generate) would add to the usage of and securing on-site facilities such as affordable housing. Other contributions cover facilities and services such as waste collection, street name plates, public art, education (primary, secondary, sixth-form and SEN), library and museums, waste management, social and healthcare, fire and rescue, highways and transport, police equipment, and local community village hall and recreational facilities.

2.6 Extracts from the application plans are **attached** at appendix 2.

### 3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Watchfield Parish Council** – Approve with points for consideration. A copy of the parish council's comments is **attached** at appendix 3.

3.2 **Representations from local residents** – A total of twelve representations had been received at the time of writing this report, all objecting to the proposal. The objections are made on the following grounds:

- Increased pressure on local amenities
- Site is subject to flooding with inadequate drainage
- Increased traffic leading to additional road congestion

- Scale of the proposal (density) would be out of keeping with the local area
  - Visual appearance out of character with the locality
  - Loss of view
- 3.3 Watchfield Primary School Board of Governors – whilst not at the published admission number the school accommodation is at capacity and any new classroom buildings would reduce the outside space available for learning and play.
- 3.4 Architects Panel – Defer for negotiation – arrangement of the two densest groups needs more thought, welcome attention to orientation but disappointing street scenes due to random relationships and house types / materials.
- 3.5 County Highways – no objection in principle. Seek to amend parking provision to provide 240 spaces and 48 unallocated visitor spaces across the scheme. Clarification of minor details needed but can be conditioned. Legal agreement for financial contributions sought.
- 3.6 Landscape Architect – No objection. Protection, treatment and maintenance of hedgerows need to be secured. Adequate garden distance between houses and hedge boundaries needs to be provided. Boundary treatments need to be specified and cycle link details clarified. Open area SUDS (surface water drainage) space is not suitable for all year use as open space, adequate open space provision should be secured. More clarity on levels and tree planting sought.
- 3.7 Arboriculturist - No objection subject to conditions and easing of building to tree relationships at the north-east corner of the site near large poplar trees.
- 3.8 Ecologist - No objection.
- 3.9 Conservation and Design Officer – Support – site is located in a village with good range of services, good pedestrian and cycle links, and is visually well contained with established boundaries. Parts of site appear crowded with poor visual outlook to car parking areas. Certain house types (G, H, terrace B) are not typical of the locality. Open space areas should exclude SUDS area as not available all year round for public access.
- 3.10 Drainage Engineer - No objection subject to inclusion of conditions for sustainable drainage scheme, foul scheme and flood risk assessment compliance.
- 3.11 Housing Services – more smaller properties are sought as part of housing mix. Distribution over the site is considered acceptable.
- 3.12 Environmental Health – No comments made on noise or air pollution issues.
- 3.13 Land Contamination – Submitted report has identified some marginal levels of soil contamination. A condition to secure detailed remediation scheme is recommended.
- 3.14 Waste Management – Require storage areas for wheeled bins per plot to be provided with collection points clear of parking areas.
- 3.15 Leisure Services – Maintenance of open space areas should be clarified and secured by adoption by parish or through a management company.
- 3.16 County archaeologist – no apparent constraints identified.
- 3.17 Thames Valley Police Liaison Officer – Proposal addresses requirements for creating

safe sustainable communities. Only comment relates to plot rear boundary treatments which should be provided at 1.8m high where possible.

3.18 Environment Agency – The site is a low risk flood area and standard advice on flood risk, should be adopted alongside the drainage engineers comments.

3.19 All relevant and necessary consultations and notifications have been carried out and checked in preparing this report.

#### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P01/V1459](#) – Refused on 4 February 2002

Residential development comprising 55 dwellings, public open space, play areas, new roundabout, access, associated infrastructure and a site for community uses.

#### 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

##### 5.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan**

The local plan was adopted in July 2006. The following relevant policies have been considered to be saved by the Secretary of State's decision of 1 July 2009 whilst the Core Strategy is being produced.

5.2 Policy GS1 of the adopted local plan provides a general location strategy to concentrate development within the five main settlements, and small scale development in other villages is covered by policies H11 (larger villages), H12 and H13 (small villages).

5.3 Policy GS2 indicates that outside the built up areas new building will not be permitted unless on land identified for development or is in accordance with other specific policies.

5.4 Policy DC1 requires new development to be of a high design quality in terms of layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials to be used, and its relationship with adjoining buildings.

5.5 Policy DC4 requires development on sites of 0.5ha or more to contribute to public art to significantly contribute to the scheme or the area.

5.6 Policy DC6 requires hard and soft landscaping to protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site and surroundings and to maximise nature conservation and wildlife habitat creation.

5.7 Policy DC9 seeks to ensure development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.

5.8 Policy NE9 says that development in the Lowland Vale will not be permitted if it would have an adverse effect on the landscape, particularly on the long and open views within or across the area.

5.9 Policy NE4 covers sites of nature conservation importance and the need to protect valued habitats.

5.10 Policy H11 allows limited development of no more than 15 dwellings in settlements such as *Watchfield* subject to design and no loss of open space.

- 5.11 Policy H13 seeks to limit new housing development outside the built up areas of settlements.
- 5.12 Policy H15 seeks net residential density of development dependant on the location of the proposal, 50dpha close to main settlement centres, 40dpha within the five main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, and 30dpha in other locations.
- 5.13 Policy H16 requires about 50% provision of housing to be two-bedroom or less for schemes of more than 10 dwellings and 10% should meet lifetime homes standards.
- 5.14 Policy H17 requires 40% provision of affordable housing for schemes of more than 15 dwellings.
- 5.15 Policy H23 refers to housing schemes providing open space areas at 15% for large villages or a financial contribution if in small villages or inappropriate to be on site.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

- 5.16 Residential Design Guide – December 2009  
Provides guidance on design and layout.
- 5.17 Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009  
Code for Sustainable Homes guidance to achieve code level 3 and working to code level 4 by 2013.
- 5.18 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Future Provision – July 2008  
Advice for the provision and maintenance requirements for open space areas.
- 5.19 Affordable Housing – July 2006  
Provides further guidance in relation to local plan policy H17.
- 5.20 Planning and Public Art – July 2006  
Sites over 0.5ha should provide a contribution towards public art installations in line with policy DC4.

### **Other Policy Documents**

- 5.21 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012**  
**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012**  
Paragraphs 14 & 49 – presumption in favour of sustainable development  
Paragraph 34 & 37 – encourage minimised journey length to work, shopping, leisure and education  
Paragraph 47 – five year housing land supply requirement  
Paragraph 50 - create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities  
Paragraphs 57, 60 & 61 – promote local distinctiveness and integrate development into the natural, built and historic environment  
Paragraph 99 – flood risk assessment  
Paragraph 109 – contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment  
Paragraph 111 - encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has previously been developed (brownfield land)  
Paragraph 118 – contribute to conserving and enhancement of biodiversity  
Paragraph 119 - presumptions in favour do not over-ride protected species and habitats directives  
Paragraph 126-134 – historic asset and environment

5.22 **South East Plan (SEP) – May 2009**

The SEP is still an extant policy document, however the government have a clear intention to revoke the document as an unnecessary hindrance to promoting development. The Court of Appeal has ruled that the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies can be a material consideration in certain circumstances with the assessment of weight given by individual decision makers. The policies of the SEP reflect those of the local plan.

Policy CC4 – Sustainable design and construction

Policy CC6 – Sustainable communities and character of the environment

Policy H3 – Affordable housing provision

Policy H4 – Type and size of new housing units

Policy H5 – Housing design and density

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

*Policy position*

- 6.1 At the heart of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Within the context of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, unless any adverse impacts would so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole (para.14).
- 6.2 The current lack of a five year supply of housing land in the district is due to the lack of delivery of new housing by developers rather than an under-supply of allocated housing land. This has primarily been caused by delays in progressing some major allocations due to the economic downturn and the delay in bringing forward the council's core strategy. The current lack of a five year housing land supply requires some flexibility in line with the NPPF in the consideration of planning applications which do not accord with local plan policy.
- 6.3 This approach, by necessity, is time limited and would be aimed at identifying sites suitable to address the housing land shortfall whilst still meeting relevant sustainability criteria as referred to in the NPPF. On the basis of the assessment of the case that has been put forward by the applicants that this proposal meets the specifications in the NPPF for providing housing in sustainable locations to address the current shortfall in the five year housing land supply, it is considered that this site can be considered favourably.
- 6.4 It is clear the proposed development is contrary to local plan policies GS2 and H11. However, whilst the council does not have a five year housing land supply, policies GS2 and H11 are inconsistent with the NPPF. The proposed development, therefore, needs to be considered on its site specific merits and whether it constitutes a sustainable form of development as defined in the NPPF.
- 6.5 Watchfield is one of the larger villages within the district and scores within the top 20 in the village hierarchy. The location of the application site is considered to be sustainable as it is close to the main village centre and to the range of services and facilities available within the village. In addition, the NPPF puts strong emphasis on housing being used to further enhance rural vitality. For these reasons, the principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable and so there is no policy objection to the proposal.

*Visual Impact - layout, landscape setting*

- 6.6 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF says that “the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment”, and paragraph 111 says that planning decisions “should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has previously been developed (brownfield land).”
- 6.7 The site has been used for agricultural or similar low activity uses in the past. The site cannot be claimed to represent brown-field land in this regard. The site lies within the countryside designation of the area and development of the site for housing is contrary to Policy H11. However as indicated above (at 6.4) this is not a restricting factor given the housing shortfall, subject to all other site specific matters being viewed as acceptable, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 6.8 The site is relatively level but with a slight crown to the east of centre of the site and appears to be generally unconstrained by previous uses. The proposed layout of the housing area and the accessibility to the plots shown offers a good use of the land in providing a workable and visually pleasing residential environment, offering a level of surveillance and visual linkage to the open areas and pedestrian routes.
- 6.9 The proposal retains and maintains the existing field boundaries to the site with additional landscaping to the open areas to be created within the housing layout. The layout relates well to the surrounding open space areas to the west and south of the site. Planning conditions can secure the retention of hedgerows and trees and the plot layouts exclude boundary screening from individual garden areas to ensure long term safeguarding of these important and established landscape features.

*Visual Impact – design and appearance*

- 6.10 The proposed housing comprises 26 detached, 34 semi-detached, and 60 terraced houses of a traditional mix of single-storey, one-and-a-half storey and two-storey appearance. Four house types (C, F, K, and M) are shown with chimneys but none have fire places within their floor plans. External construction and finish materials are listed as red brick, pale yellow render, and reconstituted stone for walls and red concrete interlocking roof tile and slate concrete interlocking roof tile. Some finish options include quoins to corners and / or window openings. Fenestration would have white coloured finished frames of traditional proportions and black rainwater goods will be used.
- 6.11 A breakdown of areas has been provided which shows-
- Developed area –
    - Building footprints (including garages) = 22,400sqm
    - Roads and paved areas = 4,000sqm
  - Amenity space / structural landscaping &
  - Usable open space / play space = 9,700sqm

Overall a total of 0.97ha (9,7020sqm) of ‘undeveloped’ land comprising landscaped amenity and open space areas is proposed. This indicates that adequate private and public outdoor space is provided as part of the development.

- 6.12 Good design in layout and building form is a key aspect of sustainable development and the NPPF is explicit in seeking a high quality outcome. The dwelling types and design are appropriate for the location and compare favourably with nearby housing at Saxon Orchard to the east of the site. The layout and arrangement of the development gives rise to a density of 33 dpha which is in line with policy H15 of the local plan.

- 6.13 The applicant's case has been considered in line with the advice in NPPF and on the basis of the proposed site layout, arrangement of dwellings and their relationship with surrounding land and uses, together with the palette of materials proposed, it is considered that this scheme is acceptable in terms of the site specific considerations.

*Access and Parking*

- 6.14 The site would be accessed off Majors Road which is shown with acceptable vision splays. Pedestrian access to the site and routes to the surrounding public open space within the adjacent residential site are also satisfactory. There are no highway objections on traffic generation grounds and consider the respective levels of on site parking (as amended) to be satisfactory. There is no objection on highway safety grounds. Issues of traffic generation, access and parking are therefore considered to be acceptable.

- 6.15 The location of the site is close to a range of existing facilities within the village and would be accessible by cycle and foot. There would be no reliance to use the car to access the facilities available in the locality.

*Impact on neighbours' residential amenity*

- 6.16 The layout of the proposed development would not have any harmful impact on the residential amenity of adjacent houses in terms of overshadowing, light pollution, over-dominance or loss of privacy. Amenity standards within the council's residential design guide have been observed and the plans have been amended to reduce the impact on existing adjoining properties and to protect the long-term retention of the screening natural hedgerow boundaries. The proposed layout is considered to deter crime and provide adequate levels of surveillance over public areas. Waste facilities (recycle bin storage and collection points) throughout the site are acceptable.

*Drainage and flooding issues*

- 6.17 The site is considered large enough to dispose of surface water without causing surface water run-off to the highway or onto neighbouring properties, and the proposal seeks to deal with rare heavy surface water run-off by means of a swale on the western side of the site, which doubles as an informal open space landscape feature.

*Heritage assets*

- 6.18 The NPPF requires that account should be taken of the desirability to sustain and enhance heritage assets. The proposal has no impact on the Watchfield Folly or its surroundings. The county archaeologist has indicated that there are no concerns raised and no issues have been raised by the council's design and conservation officer.

*Social Infrastructure*

- 6.19 Concern has been expressed that current social and physical infrastructure within the village could not cope with the increase in residents from this proposal. Of specific note have been comments from the primary school governing body and their view that there is no available room on site to expand the school further. However, contributions to offset the impact from the development have been sought, including contributions for educational provision by Oxfordshire County Council who is the education authority responsible for school place provision. The applicant has agreed to the principle of addressing these diverse contribution needs through off-site provision to be secured through a legal agreement / obligation.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposal does not accord with the development plan and has been publicised as a departure. However, in the light of the current shortfall in the council's five year housing

land supply, the proposal should be afforded appropriate weight on the basis of the following :

- in terms of character - being located adjoining an existing street scene forming part of the village environment
- in terms of adding to the settlement – being located within an established and clearly defined area that provides a defensible boundary to open areas to the west and south
- in terms of sustainability - adjoining an existing large village settlement with close availability of services and facilities

7.2 The proposal would result in a sustainable development being very close to established village facilities and services and therefore is in accordance with the requirements of the national planning policy framework (NPPF). The proposal will not be harmful to heritage assets, the character of the area, residential amenity or highway safety and therefore complies with the NPPF.

7.3 In addition, the scheme could come on stream quickly as all the necessary criteria are in place for swift development on site which will assist in quickly addressing the current housing land shortfall.

## 8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **It is recommended that the decision to grant planning permission be delegated to head of planning in consultation with the committee chairman subject to:**

1. **The prior completion of a section 106 agreement within a deadline of three months to complete for on-site affordable housing provision, contributions toward off-site facilities and services including highway works, education improvements, waste management and collection, street names signs, public art, library and museum service, social and health care, fire and rescue, police equipment, village recreational and community facility improvements;**
2. **The following conditions, including the requirement to commence development within 12 months to help address the immediate housing land shortfall:**

1. **TL1 - Time limit (12 months)**
2. **Listing the approved drawings**
3. **MC2 - Materials (Samples)**
4. **MC9 - Building Details**
5. **RE6 - Boundary Details**
6. **RE17 - Slab levels and dwelling heights**
7. **LS1 - Landscaping Scheme implementation and maintenance**
8. **LS4 trees**
9. **Drainage details including SUDS**
10. **Flood risk assessment**
11. **Contamination survey remediation scheme**
12. **Contamination verification report**
13. **HY2 Access according with specified plan**
14. **HY17 closure of existing access**
15. **HY8 car parking spaces**
16. **HY12 new estate roads**
17. **HY13 estate roads prior to occupation of dwellings**
18. **HY20 bicycle parking**
19. **MC29 sustainable drainage scheme**

**20. MC32 construction method statement**

**21. UNI refuse bin storage**

**22. travel info packs**

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