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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P13/V0575/O</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	OUTLINE
<b>REGISTERED</b>	22.03.2013
<b>PARISH</b>	MARCHAM
<b>WARD MEMBER</b>	Catherine Webber
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Mrs King-Thompson and Shorthouse
<b>SITE</b>	King's Field, Sheepstead Road, Marcham
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Erection of 43 dwellings with associated means of access, car parking, new footpath links, amenity space and landscaping (as amended by Drawing Nos: 3947_SK and 13025-T03 Revision B accompanying agent's letter of 23 May 2013 and email of 13 June 2013 and clarified by Drawing C13025-C001A accompanying agent's email of 10 July 2013)
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	As above
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	445513/197256
<b>OFFICER</b>	Mr Peter Brampton

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 King's Field is situated on the northern side of Marcham and is approximately two hectares in size. It was mostly recently used for livestock grazing. There is an existing access from Sheepstead Road in the northwestern corner. Hedging and trees define the western and eastern boundary of the site, trees and low-level fencing sit along the northern boundary, whilst the southern boundary is largely defined by fencing as it is shared with the properties of Kings Avenue.
- 1.2 The site itself is largely flat and featureless. The access road is informal and currently serves storage buildings located on land to the north, which does not form part of the application site.
- 1.3 A footpath runs along the eastern boundary of the site, which runs to the allotments to the north and links to the existing low-density development to the south. The main facilities of the village are located to the south.
- 1.4 The application comes to committee as Marcham Parish Council recommends refusal, and as 29 letters of objection have been received.
- 1.5 A location plan is **attached** as Appendix 1.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of 43 dwellings on the land. All matters are reserved except for access. The illustrative masterplan shows a variety of detached and semi-detached houses, orientated along the single main access road that runs from the northwestern corner across the site in a southeasterly direction. The existing access will be upgraded.
- 2.2 The illustrative masterplan has been amended to reduce the number of dwellings from 48 to 43. There are two areas of public open space within the development, one centrally located and one in the southeastern corner.
- 2.3 During the processing of the application, the applicants have provided additional ecology reports, highway information and a drainage strategy for the site, in response

to concerns raised by the council's drainage engineer and Thames Water.

2.4 The applicants propose to extend the footpath along the western boundary. This will be extended up to serve the existing allotments to the north of the site. The new development will link into and improve the existing footpath along the eastern boundary.

2.5 Financial contributions towards off-site services are required to mitigate the impact of the additional residents who will occupy the proposed development. As well as ensuring affordable housing and public open space is achieved on site, the applicants will provide financial contributions to a number of infrastructure requirements. The contributions currently requested can be summarised thus:

2.6 **County Council agreement**

- Education - £140,365
- Libraries - £8,856
- Waste Management - £6,912
- Museums - £540
- Social and Health Care - £11,550
- Public transport - £34,185

2.7 **Vale of White Horse agreement**

- Artificial grass pitch - £3083
- Football pitches - £7,378
- Cricket pitches - £2,995
- Rugby pitches - £1,767
- Tennis Courts - £10,095
- MUGA - £10,027
- Sports pavilion - £17,708
- Indoors sports hall - £22,502
- Indoor swimming pool - £17,402
- Public Open Space – Commuted Sum for maintenance - £79,710
- Public art - £12,900
- Waste Collection - £7,310
- Street names - £663
- Police - £15,250
- NHS Primary Care Trust - £17,299
- Shop mobility - £1405
- Local facilities - TBC

2.8 Extracts from the applications plans are attached as **Appendix 2**. Documents submitted in support of the application, included the planning statement, design and access statement, flood risk assessment and transport statement are available on the council's website.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Marcham Parish Council** – Recommends refusal. The main objections can be summarised thus:

- Inadequate sewerage and land drainage provision
- Development beyond the built boundary of the village onto greenfield site
- Proposal would represent an over-expansion of the village, given current applications
- Marcham primary school does not have capacity to accommodate this

development

The full views of the parish council are attached as **Appendix 3**

- 3.2 **Neighbour Representations** – One letter received confirming general support. Twenty-nine letters of objection received. The main concerns can be summarised thus:
- Development will extend village beyond its natural boundary into open countryside
  - Marcham is being asked to accommodate disproportionate amount of housing
  - The community-led plan states existing permissions are all village can accommodate
  - Increased risk of flooding
  - Potential noise and smell from proposed mechanical drainage system
  - Impact on capacity of drains and sewers
  - Position of access will endanger highway safety
  - Road network and public transport inadequate to cope with increased population
  - Insufficient capacity at village primary school
  - Loss of wildlife habitats
  - Loss of trees
  - Concerns over cut-through into Kings Avenue (which has been removed in the amended plan)
  - Loss of privacy for King's Avenue residents
  - Loss of agricultural land
  - Insufficient community facilities to support additional population
  - Lack of contributions to community
- 3.3 **Highways Liaison Officer** – No objections subject to conditions (outlined in Section 8 of this report). A traffic regulation order to extend the 30mph zone beyond the access is necessary and the development must fund this. Contributions to public transport provision will also be necessary.
- 3.4 **Housing Development Officer** – Requires 40% of units to be affordable
- 3.5 **Waste Management Officer** – Standard comments on refuse collection provided
- 3.6 **Environment Agency** – Standard comments on flood risk in low probability areas provided
- 3.7 **Drainage Officer** – No objections following submission of revised drainage strategy. Conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage requested
- 3.8 **Thames Water Development Control** – Concerns raised over capacity of existing waste water infrastructure. Requests Grampian condition relating to drainage strategy for on and off site drainage works. Strategy will require Thames Water approval.
- 3.9 **Crime Prevention Design Adviser** - No objections, requests condition relating to crime prevention design measures
- 3.10 **Landscape Architect** – No objections
- 3.11 **Natural England** – Requested additional surveys on bat activity

- 3.12 **Countryside Officer** – No objections following receipt of additional surveys on barn owl and bat activity
- 3.13 **Conservation Officer** – General comments on design provided
- 3.14 **Forestry Officer** – Concerns about impact of development on some significant trees and the potential for future pressure from new homeowners to remove more trees than is shown. Any reserved matters application will need to be accompanied by a detailed layout, consistent with the relevant British Standard
- 3.15 **Environmental Protection Officer** - No objections
- 3.16 **Leisure and recreation officer** – Comments provided about public open space, provision of play equipment and pedestrian and cycle linkages into village
- 3.17 **CPRE** – Objects to the development, which is overdevelopment of a greenfield site on the edge of a village with insufficient infrastructure to support the additional dwellings. There will be a loss of valuable agricultural land, trees and wildlife habitats

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

4.1 None

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

##### 5.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;**

- GS1 - Developments in Existing Settlements
- GS2 - Development in the Countryside
- DC1 - Design
- DC3 - Design against crime
- DC4 - Public Art
- DC5 - Access
- DC6 - Landscaping
- DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling
- DC8 - The Provision of Infrastructure and Services
- DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses
- H11 - Development in the Larger Villages
- H13 - Development Elsewhere
- H16 - Size of Dwelling and Lifetime Homes
- H17 - Affordable Housing
- H23 - Open Space in New Housing Development
- NE9 - Lowland Vale

##### **Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/SPG)**

- Residential Design Guide – December 2009
- Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009
- Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008
- Affordable Housing – July 2006
- Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006
- Planning and Public Art – July 2006

##### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012**

- Paragraphs 14 and 29 – presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Paragraphs 34 & 37 – encourage minimised journey length to work, shopping, leisure and education
- Paragraph 47 – five year housing 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 – contribution to and enhancement of the natural environment

Paragraph 111 – encourage the effective use of land

## 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### *Current policy position*

- 6.1 This scheme is contrary to Policies GS2 and H11 of the Local Plan, which restrict development on unallocated greenfield sites and housing developments outside the larger villages of the district. Thus, ordinarily, the council would only consider the potential development of this land through the local plan process given the site's size and location and its potential to be part of a larger strategic housing land allocation. This process would ensure the planning for and management of the necessary combined infrastructure delivery. However, the council must assess this application on its own merits.

### *Principle of development*

- 6.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is clear that council's should grant planning permission where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, unless any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole (Para 14 refers).
- 6.3 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF confirms the need for a council to have a demonstrable five-year supply of housing land. It is well documented this council does not currently have this five-year supply. This is due to the lack of delivery of new housing by developers, rather than an under-supply of allocated housing land. This lack of delivery is primarily due to delays in progressing some major allocations due to the economic downturn and bringing forward the council's new local plan. This lack of a five-year housing land supply requires some flexibility in line with the NPPF when assessing applications that do not accord with local plan policies.
- 6.4 This approach is necessarily for a limited time, and is aimed at identifying sites suitable to address the housing shortfall whilst meeting the relevant sustainability and design criteria of the NPPF.
- 6.5 It is clear this application is contrary to local plan policies GS2 and H11. However, whilst the council does not have a five-year housing land supply, these two policies are inconsistent with the NPPF. Therefore, the council must assess the proposed application on its site-specific merits and whether, under the NPPF, it is a sustainable form of development.
- 6.6 This assessment needs to balance the desire of the council to assess the scheme through a strategic sites allocation process against the NPPF's tests, which primarily relate to location, design, landscape impact, drainage, and highway safety.

### *Emerging policy position*

- 6.7 The emerging Local Plan Part One identifies Marcham as a larger village falling within the Abingdon on Thames and Oxford Fringe sub-area. Within this sub-area, 2291 homes will be provided by 2029, of which sites for 299 units remain to be identified (not including planning permissions granted since April 2012).

- 6.8 Thus, as one of the larger settlements in this sub-area, it is likely Marcham will accommodate some of the unidentified housing. It is important to reiterate this emerging local plan only has very limited weight at this stage, as it has only undergone an initial public consultation. Thus, at this time, the overriding definition of sustainable development remains that of the NPPF and its associated tests, which are outlined above.
- 6.9 *Use of land*  
Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states, “*planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.*” The site is presently agricultural land, so it is not brownfield land. This greenfield site lies in relatively open countryside, albeit on the edge of Marcham. Neighbouring objectors have highlighted the need to retain agricultural land.
- 6.10 Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states, “*local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a high quality.*”
- 6.11 There is some debate over the classification of this field. DEFRA maps from 1974 indicate it falls within Agricultural Land Classification 2, which is one of the higher designations. However, in 1973, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) classified the land as Grade 4, which is one of the lowest designations.
- 6.12 The survey conducted by ARC is more detailed and describes the land as “*sandy...with small hard limestone fragments...which interfere with cultivations and harvesting.*” The applicant’s family has owned the land since 1964, and states they have found that the shallow soil was not conducive to growing cereal crops. Hay yields have also been poor and most recently the land has been used for grazing.
- 6.13 Generally, the evidence suggests this is poor quality agricultural land. This, coupled with the need for additional housing land in the district, would override any concerns about retaining this land for agricultural production.
- Sustainability credentials*
- 6.14 Marcham is one of the larger villages within the district and scores within the top 20 in the village hierarchy. The village benefits from a primary school, post office, village shop, two churches and two pubs. The proximity of Abingdon, three miles to the west, cannot be ignored, which provides further employment, retail, recreation and social facilities.
- 6.15 The illustrative masterplan shows good walking and cycling links from the site, leading in a southerly direction into the heart of the village. Marcham is historically quite a compact settlement, so that the shops and facilities of the village are close together. Walking down North Street, at the closest point the new houses would be around 600 metres from Packhorse Lane, where the main services of the village are located. The school and existing recreation ground is a similar distance along Howard Cornish Road.
- 6.16 There is a committee resolution to grant planning permission for 51 houses on Anson Field in the centre of the village, next to the primary school (planning application P12/V0584). As part of this proposal, a new community sports facility will be provided on Howard Cornish Road. At the closest point, this is around 275 metres from King’s Field.

- 6.17 Officers consider that the main facilities of the village are all within easy walking or cycling distance from King's Field. This makes the site a relatively sustainable location for new residential development. Equally, public transport services to nearby service centres including Abingdon are also within easy reach. This application will be required to provide a financial contribution to the public transport offering in the area, which will enhance the existing services and improve connections to Abingdon and beyond.
- 6.18 Parish and local objections highlight the lack of capacity at Marcham primary school for the additional children this development will result in (12 pupils estimated). The Anson Field proposal incorporates the construction of two additional classrooms at Marcham School to mitigate the impact of that development. Those additional classrooms, if built, would not be sufficient to also mitigate the additional demand from this development.
- 6.19 Accordingly, Oxfordshire County Council is requesting financial contributions from this development to fund additional primary education infrastructure at Marcham, which could involve building a second storey at the existing school, which is a primarily single storey building. If additional capacity is not provided before the houses are occupied there is the prospect of young children from this development travelling to school outside the village, as is currently the case for secondary school pupils. Whilst officers recognise this is not ideal, the fact that the development will secure funds to improve primary school capacity and that this is likely to happen in the short term means it is not considered that this reason is sufficient to justify refusal of the application.
- 6.20 Officers have discussed the deliverability of this scheme with the applicant. They have confirmed the site is in single ownership and that a number of national house builders have expressed an interest in taking the site on should consent be granted. Initial discussions with a registered provider are also ongoing.
- 6.21 Given the clear demand for additional housing in the district, the proximity of the site to local services, the proximity of Marcham itself to Abingdon and the previous permissive approach taken to housing development in the village, this site is a suitable location for housing development when assessed against the tests of the NPPF.
- Cumulative impact considerations*
- 6.22 Using the latest population data available to the council, which assumes an occupancy rate of 2.409 people per house, this development will increase the population of Marcham parish by 104 people. Using the latest census data, this represents a 6% increase in the population of the village.
- 6.23 However, it is also important to consider other recent planning applications in the village. Anson Field, with 51 houses, will bring another 123 people into the village. At the committee meeting of 19 June 2013, it was resolved to grant planning permission for a development of 18 houses, on land north of Priory Lane, representing another 43 people in the parish (planning application P13/V0859). Thus, the total increase in the parish population is likely to be 270 people, representing a 16% increase. Officers are mindful the community led plan in the village indicates a strong resistance in the village to further housing beyond that already agreed. However, when balanced against the current housing shortfall in the district, and the sustainability credentials of Marcham when compared to other villages for locating new housing, officers consider this increase in the population of the village is not so high as to be harmful to the

character and vitality of the village.

- 6.24 Nonetheless, the increase in properties will lead to additional pressure on existing services, hence the need to seek contributions from the applicant, as discussed in Paragraphs 2.4-2.6. These contributions will include support for local community projects. There are no other applications for housing development in Marcham at the time of writing.

*Affordable Housing and housing mix*

- 6.25 The applicant has indicated their acceptance to the requisite affordable housing provision on the site. This is 40% to accord with local plan policy. This provision will be secured through a legal agreement should the recommendation of approval be agreed.
- 6.26 The distribution of the affordable housing within the site will be confirmed by the reserved matters application, should this outline planning permission be granted. The council will require an appropriate spread of affordable units, mixed in with, and indistinguishable from, the market housing.
- 6.27 The affordable housing totals 17 units. The mix of that will be 1 bed (12%), 2 bed (59%), 3 bed (24%) and 4 bed (6%) (Figures are rounded). This mix is in line with council policy and has been agreed by the council's housing officer. The overall mix of the development is 1 bed (5%), 2 bed (28%), 3 bed (58%) and 4 bed (9%) (Figures are rounded).

*Impact on residential amenity*

- 6.28 A number of neighbours on the northern side of King's Avenue have objected to the loss of privacy this development will result in. However, the illustrative plan shows a layout that can achieve the requisite back to back distances of 21 metres, as recommended by the council's residential design guide.
- 6.29 Given these distances, officers are satisfied this development will not result in any undue harm to neighbouring amenity.

*Visual impact – landscape, layout, design and appearance*

- 6.30 The NPPF is explicit in seeking a high quality outcome for good design in terms of layout and building form, seeing as a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 109 states, "*the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.*"
- 6.31 As outlined in Section 1, the site is visually well contained by a strong network of trees and hedging on three sides, and the existing residential development to the south. Much of the existing planting will be retained and supplemented to boost the privacy of the site.
- 6.32 The illustrative layout shows housing facing onto Sheepstead Road, the open space in the middle of the site, and the open space, footpath and protected trees along the eastern boundary. The site has good legibility, with a single main access road, with side streets leading from it. The plan shows differing surfaces between the main road and the side streets, to encourage reduced speeds in the residential parts of the site. The proposed footpath links are easily accessible from the development, allowing easy access into the village. The density of the development is appropriate to the edge of village setting, respecting the character of the existing residential development to the south.



- 6.33 The council's landscape officer has confirmed no objections to the scheme. To ensure the quality of the development, conditions relating to materials, boundary treatments, landscaping and tree protection are necessary.

*Highway Safety*

- 6.34 Many local objectors have raised concerns about visibility at the proposed access, the speed of traffic along Sheepstead Road and the subsequent potential for accidents.
- 6.35 The County Council Highways Liaison Officer has confirmed the visibility at the proposed access meets necessary standards and is therefore acceptable. This is subject to the 30 mph speed limit, and the village "gateway" feature being moved to the north of the proposed access. This work will be done at the applicants' expense with the agreement of the Highway Authority.
- 6.36 The Transport Statement indicates that parking to appropriate standards will be provided, including visitor parking. The precise layout for parking would be secured as part of the reserved matters application. Subject to various conditions relating to the access, visibility and parking, this proposal will have an acceptable impact on highway safety.

*Drainage and flooding issues*

- 6.37 The potential for flooding from the site has been a key objection from officers, consultees and local residents. Officers understand there is a natural spring within the site and the field is quite often sodden with water. Furthermore, Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application.
- 6.38 The applicants have provided a drainage strategy to overcome this. This strategy proposes a number of new on-site and off-site works including the provision of an underground storage tank under one area of open space, and a foul pumping station in the southeastern corner of the development. The re-laying of existing pipes within King's Road will also be necessary, and these will be offered to Thames Water to adopt as a public sewer.
- 6.39 The council's drainage engineer has confirmed this strategy is acceptable and overcomes concerns relating to drainage. This will be subject to detailed pre-commencement conditions that require a full drainage strategy to be agreed. This will include an analysis of the existing Thames Water network, and an impact study that Thames Water will need to agree before works start on site. Details of the pumping system will also be necessary to ensure it causes no harm from its operation.
- 6.40 A full surface water drainage strategy for the site, which is SUDS compliant, will also be required by condition. This is required by the council's drainage engineer, Thames Water and the Highways Authority. With these conditions in place, and given the outline nature of the application, officers are satisfied the information provided by the applicants is sufficient to overcome initial objections relating to drainage and flooding from the new housing.

*Other issues*

- 6.41 The reserved matters application will require the applicant to demonstrate adequate provision of refuse and recycling storage. This is to meet the requirements of the council's waste contractor.
- 6.42 The public open space totals 15% of the site, as required by the council's Open space, sport and recreation future provision SPD. The applicant will be required to

appoint a management company to maintain the land in a good order, or to offer the land to the parish council for them to maintain. A commuted sum to the parish to fund this maintenance will be necessary and secured by a legal agreement.

- 6.43 It is proposed that the development will achieve the equivalent of Level Four when measured against the Code for Sustainable Homes. Details of this will form part of a reserved matters application.
- 6.44 A number of local objectors have raised concerns about the loss of wildlife habitats this scheme will entail. Natural England also raised initial concerns about the potential to affect habitats of bats and barn owls. The applicants have instructed ecologists to carry out surveys of the site, which have been carefully assessed by the Countryside Officer. The surveys have found no significant activity of protected species, and the Countryside Officer has no objections to the proposals.
- 6.45 A number of trees will need to be removed to accommodate this development, whilst others will be shown as being incorporated into gardens as part of the illustrative layout. The council's forestry officer has highlighted the need for the detailed layout of the scheme to be compliant with the latest British Standard on trees in relation to construction works.
- 6.46 Section 106 agreements with the Vale and with Oxfordshire County Council are well advanced, and officers are confident that planning permission can be granted. However, to allow time for securing a full and proper set of contributions, officers propose a two month period following this committee to finalise the agreements. If unforeseen problems arise, then officers will require authority, in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee, to refuse the application.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This proposal does not accord with the development plan and so the council has advertised it as a departure. However, in light of the current shortfall in the council's five year housing supply, the proposal is considered acceptable given the following:
- Character – The site is visually well-contained, lying on the edge of the village, and will not have a materially harmful impact on the wider landscape
  - Sustainability – The site is well located to access the facilities of Marcham, with good pedestrian and cycle links. Marcham is one of the district's larger villages, with good proximity to Abingdon.
  - Technical concerns regarding flood risk, drainage and loss of wildlife habitats have been overcome through the provision of additional information and surveys.
- 7.2 The proposal would result in a sustainable development in terms of the relationship and proximity to local facilities and services, when assessed against the NPPF.
- 7.3 Importantly, this site is in a single ownership, with negotiations with a partner house builder and registered social landlord ongoing. This makes the site deliverable within one year. This makes a measurable contribution to help address the current housing land shortfall. A condition requiring the commencement of development within one year of the date of the grant of planning permission is recommended and is acceptable to the applicant.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATION

**It is recommended that authority to grant outline planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the committee chairman and vice-chairman subject to:**

**1. A S106 agreement with both the County Council and District Council in order to secure contributions towards local infrastructure and to secure the affordable housing.**

**2. Conditions as follows**

- 1 : Time limit - 1 year**
- 2 : Time limit - Reserved Matters application – 6 months**
- 3 : Approved plans**
- 4 : Sample materials to be agreed**
- 5 : Visibility Splays to be agreed**
- 6 : Access, Park. & Turning to be agreed**
- 7 : No Drainage to Highway**
- 8 : Submission of Landscaping Scheme**
- 9 : Implementation of Landscaping Scheme**
- 10 : Boundary Details to be agreed**
- 11 : Drainage Details (Surface and Foul) to be agreed**
- 12 : Sustainable Drainage Scheme to be agreed**
- 13 : Details of sewer connections to be agreed**
- 14 : Construction traffic management plan to be agreed**
- 15 : Works in accordance with Flood Risk Assessment**
- 16 : Tree Protection to be agreed**
- 17 : Wildlife Protection as per submitted statements**

**3. If the required section 106 agreements are not completed, and planning permission cannot be granted by the determination deadline of 24 September 2013, it is recommended that authority to refuse planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman.**

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