

MAR/19761/1 – Try Homes Ltd

Proposed residential development of 10 dwellings with associated access. Timber Yard, Packhorse Lane, Marcham.

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 10 dwellings, comprising of 4 x 2 bed terrace units (plots 1-4) which will be affordable units, 5 x 4 bed units (plots 5-8 & plot 10), and 1x3 bed unit (plot 9), with associated parking (1.5 spaces for each two bed unit and 2 spaces for each 3 and 4 bed dwelling).
- 1.2 The site is located on the south side of Packhorse Lane, a narrow, heavily used, winding road through the village with no footways. The site is a former timber yard, but has not been used for many years and is currently an overgrown plot with mature planting on its boundary with Packhorse Lane. To the east of the site lies a small collection of timber buildings, also known locally as the 'timber yard'. To the south lies a recent development undertaken by the applicant of five detached dwellings, the access to which will be used to access this application site. The site lies just outside the Marcham Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The proposed dwellings are arranged to front onto Packhorse Lane, but with vehicular access being taken off Mill Road. The scheme has been designed to mirror the tightly knit and compact village character that is found at the centre of Marcham which consists of a variety of traditional buildings of varying heights that are hard up against the site boundaries between properties and predominantly front and abut with the A415 road frontage, interspersed occasionally with individual properties set back from the road edge.
- 1.4 The proposal has a density of 33.3 dwellings per hectare.
- 1.5 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and layout together with the design statement are attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.6 The application comes to Committee because a number of objection letters have been received and the views of Marcham Parish Council differ from the recommendation.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 In July 2005, planning permission was granted for the 5 recently constructed dwellings to the south of the site.
- 2.2 In October 2006, planning permission was refused for the erection of 4 detached dwellings on the site. An appeal has been lodged with regard to this scheme, the outcome of which is still awaited at the time of writing the report. A copy of the refused layout plan and the decision notice are attached at **Appendix 2**.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*
Policy GS5 (making efficient use of land and buildings) seeks to promote the efficient re-use of previously developed / unused land and buildings within settlements (provided there is no conflict with other policies in the Local Plan).
- 3.2 Policy H11 (development in the larger villages) enables new housing development within the built-up area of Marcham, provided the scale, layout, mass and design of the dwellings would not materially harm the form, structure, or character of the village, and does not involve the loss of facilities important to the local community (i.e. informal public open space).

- 3.3 Policy H15 (housing densities) seeks net residential densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare in the larger villages, provided there would be no harm to the character of the surrounding area or the amenities of adjoining properties.
- 3.4 Policies DC1, DC5, DC6, DC8, DC9 and DC14 (quality of new development) are relevant and seek to ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design / landscaping; does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours; suitable social and physical infrastructure exists for the development or can be provided; the development is acceptable in terms of highway safety; and it will not result in adverse surface water run off.
- 3.5 Policy HE1 (preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas) confirms that proposals for development within or affecting the setting of a conservation area will not be permitted unless it can be shown to preserve or enhance the established character or appearance of the area.
- 3.6 PPS3, "Housing", is also relevant and reiterates the key objective of developing previously developed sites within urban areas, where suitable, ahead of greenfield sites and making the most effective and efficient use of land. It also comments on the importance of design, in that proposed development should complement neighbouring buildings and the local area in terms of scale, density, layout and access. Paragraph 12 of PPS3 confirms that good design is fundamental to the development of high quality new housing, whilst Paragraph 13 goes on to state that design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.
- 4.0 **Consultations**
- 4.1 Marcham Parish Council has objected to the application and their comments are attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 County Engineer – no objections, subject to conditions.
- 4.3 County Head of Transport – The County Council is planning to trial a one way working within the centre of Marcham which involves a set of temporary traffic lights and the provision of a temporary footway through the narrowest section. It is hoped to trial this in the next few months. If this is successful, then a permanent scheme can be introduced as soon as funding is available through the Local Transport Plan. The provision of a footway along the site's frontage as part of this development will aid pedestrian safety, albeit to a limited extent due to people having to cross the road to gain access to it. However, the added benefit is that visibility through the narrowest section of the road will also be improved, which will assist safety and help with the one-way scheme.
- 4.4 County Funding Officer – seeks contributions to education / library / fire and rescue provision and waste management operations.
- 4.5 Drainage Engineer – no objections (subject to conditions).
- 4.6 Environmental Health – no objections.
- 4.7 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 4.8 Arboricultural Officer – no objections. The trees to be removed are not of a quality to warrant retention.
- 4.9 14 letters of objection have been received, which can be summarised as follows:

- The planned pavement in front of the dwellings goes nowhere. There is no pavement opposite, and visibility for pedestrians to cross over is severely restricted due to the bend. This will be dangerous for both pedestrians and vehicles.
- In terms of road safety, it would be better if the road (Packhorse Lane) is moved over so that a pavement can be built on the north edge of the road that links with the current pavement from the Baptist church (easterly bend) with the existing pavement outside the pub (westerly bend). A short stretch of pavement on the south side will not solve the problem.
- Please do not allow this application without some sort of grand design for the safety of road users and residents who have to walk along the A415.
- If the Council intends to purchase additional land so that this pavement can be linked to the cycle track to Abingdon, then it may be acceptable.
- The new road from Mill Road should be adopted by the County Council, as people in affordable housing will not want the extra costs of road maintenance. It will also be better for the village if the access road is not gated, as at present it is separated from the village.
- The proposed access via the existing 'private' access in Mill Road will not be safe and convenient as required under Policy DC5. It is narrow, has no pedestrian footway and is not capable of accommodating the additional traffic from these 10 units. Visibility at the entrance is also restricted. Access should be taken directly off Packhorse Lane.
- It is unacceptable to increase traffic in Mill Road. This will only lead to further delays for residents exiting Mill Road onto Packhorse Lane.
- During the building of the five detached dwellings, residents had to endure inconvenience through construction vehicles blocking Mill Road. More construction will only incur the same problems for local residents.
- The proposed 2m wide pavement will encourage occupants of the dwellings to park their cars on it, especially as the parking provision is inadequate. It will also lead to HGVs being able to pass each other at the same time, to the detriment of highway safety. At present HGVs have to stop for each other, which slows the traffic.
- The proposed dwellings right up to, and facing Packhorse Lane, are far too close to the road and will reduce visibility on the bend. There should be no pedestrian access onto Packhorse Lane.
- They will also be higher than the road and will look straight into the existing properties opposite. This will lead to an unacceptable loss of privacy.
- This is an overdevelopment of the site. Only six dwellings should be built. The density proposed is far too high. The size of the six larger houses is out of proportion to the cottages opposite.
- The height of certain houses in the scheme would be unnecessarily imposing and dominant relative to the surrounding area and they do not make a positive contribution to the character of the area.
- The five dwellings recently built fit well with the immediate surrounding area. Close attention was clearly taken to their design. The proposal seems completely at odds with this development and significantly compromises the village's character and style. The original scheme for 4 dwellings was more appropriate, being set back from the road.
- There are currently 12 social housing dwellings under construction at Longfields. It is inconceivable that any more social housing is required in Marcham at this point in time.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The main issues in this case are considered to be 1) the principle of the development in this location, 2) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, 3) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, and 4) the safety of the access and parking arrangements.
- 5.2 On the first issue, Marcham is identified in the Local Plan as a larger village that can accommodate new housing development providing the layout, mass and design would not harm the character of the area. PPS 3 'Housing' also makes it a priority to use previously developed land for new housing. Furthermore, PPS3 encourages the use of innovative

approaches to achieve higher densities within existing settlements. In this respect, paragraphs 9 and 10 specifically refer to the Government's strategic housing policy goal to create sustainable, inclusive, and mixed communities in all areas, with the planning system delivering a mix of housing, to support a wide variety of households at a sufficient quantity to take account of need and demand and to seek to improve choice. The principle of a development in the manner proposed is therefore considered an acceptable and appropriate form of development in this location. It will also provide much needed affordable housing in the form of four x two bedroom units.

- 5.3 Regarding the second issue, the development in the form proposed is not considered to be out of keeping with the locality. It is important to reiterate Paragraph 34 of PPS1 and Paragraph 13 of PPS3 when assessing this scheme in that "design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted".
- 5.4 As the appeal site lies close to the historic core of the village (and in particular adjoins the A415) the tight-knit form and traditional vernacular style of fronting onto the road is the prevailing character of this part of the village. The original scheme for 4 dwellings was refused in part because it had no relationship with the road frontage, and thus failed to take account of the site's context and prevalent urban grain that exists within the village core. As a result, the existing tight-knit character has influenced the pattern of the proposed development.
- 5.5 The design of the dwellings takes reference from the various styles that are prevalent in Marcham, namely strong gables, narrow spans and steep pitches. The changes in ridge heights, also adds variety to the development, complementing the varied roof heights that are found throughout the village. The orientation of plot 10 to the east respects the bend in the road, and produces a more varied street scene, similar to other properties in Marcham that follow the alignment of the road. Officers consider the design proposed to be wholly acceptable. Furthermore, the Consultant Architect has commented that the proposal would relate satisfactorily to the urban grain of Marcham, and considers the design to be acceptable.
- 5.6 The development is not considered to be an overdevelopment of the site. The scheme has a density of 33.3 dwellings per Hectare, which accords with Local Plan Policy H15 in terms of exceeding 30 dwellings per Hectare in this location. Adequate private amenity space exists for each dwelling to the rear, and the streetscene is varied through the use of staggered terraces and semis and the alignment of the buildings to match the curve of the road do not appear overly congested in relation to neighbouring buildings. Furthermore, the loss of specified trees to the front of the site is not considered to be so harmful to the locality to warrant refusal. The Arboricultural Officer has raised no objections. Consequently, Officers consider the visual impact of the proposal to be acceptable.
- 5.7 Turning to the third issue, the impact on neighbouring properties, it is considered that no undue harm would be caused to those recently constructed properties to the rear from overlooking. Additional traffic movements in The Green are also not considered to unduly harm these properties to an extent that would warrant refusal of permission.
- 5.8 In respect of the properties opposite the site, views from the new houses across Packhorse Lane are not considered to be harmful, given that this is the public side of these dwellings where amenity is expected to be less than that of the private spaces to the rear. The closest point is plot 8 to nos. 19 and 21 Packhorse Lane, which are 18.5m apart, a distance your Officers consider to be acceptable in the public realm between frontages. Whilst the site is higher than Packhorse Lane, other properties opposite are also raised above the road level (namely nos. 9, 11 and 13), and the relationship is considered acceptable. Furthermore, it is considered no adverse impact in terms of loss of light or over dominance of these properties will result from this scheme.
- 5.9 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable, and are certainly considered to be safer than any vehicular access directly onto Packhorse

Lane. The parking shows 1.5 spaces for each affordable unit and 2 spaces for each of the other dwellings. Adequate visibility can also be achieved at the access onto Mill Road to ensure pedestrian and highway safety. The County Engineer raises no objection to the proposal.

- 5.10 Regarding the proposed footway at the front of the site, the County Council's Head of Transport has confirmed that such provision is to be welcomed, as it will aid pedestrian safety, and visibility through the narrowest section of the road will also be improved, which will assist road safety.
- 5.11 Financial contributions are being sought for highways and social infrastructure to meet the need generated by this proposal to improve local services. As such, any impact on existing social infrastructure that may arise from this proposal will be mitigated and will need to be secured through a Section 106 agreement.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That authority to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair in order to allow the completion of a S106 Agreement to secure the required financial contribution for highways and social infrastructure.*

1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
2. *MC2 – Sample Materials*
3. *RE2 – Restriction on extensions / alterations to dwellings (PD rights removed)*
4. *RE8 – Submission of drainage details*
5. *RE7 – Submission of boundary details.*
6. *RE22 – Slab levels*
7. *The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until detailed drawings and specification of the internal road layout have been submitted to the District Planning Authority and agreed in consultation with the Highway Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*
8. *HY25 - Car parking layout in accordance with specified plan*
9. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until a 2 metre wide footway is constructed across the whole of the site frontage to the standard specification of Oxfordshire County Council for such works.*
10. *The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme preventing the use of the Packhorse Lane junction as a means of access to the site has been submitted to, and approved by, the District Planning Authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented prior to the first occupation of any dwelling hereby approved and shall be maintained at all times thereafter.*
11. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the construction of the estate road serving the development, including footways and verges, has been undertaken in accordance with the standard specification of Oxfordshire County Council for such works.*

12. *The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time that the means by which refuse will be collected from the development has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority.*
13. *LS4 – Submission of landscaping scheme*
14. *RE14 – Garage accommodation to be retained.*
15. *No development shall commence until full details of the method of surface water and foul sewage drainage construction have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The approved drainage scheme shall be constructed only in accordance with approved method.*
16. *MC34 – Contaminated land*
17. *No development shall commence until a scheme for the provision of affordable housing as part of the development has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The scheme shall include:*
 - a) *4x2 bed units (plots 1 to 4);*
 - b) *The type and tenure of the affordable housing provision;*
 - c) *A programme for the construction of the affordable housing;*
 - d) *The arrangements to ensure that such provision is affordable for both initial and subsequent occupiers of the affordable units; and*
 - e) *The occupancy criteria to be used for determining the identity of prospective and successive occupiers of the affordable housing and the means by which such occupancy shall be enforced.*

The affordable housing shall be provided in accordance with the approved scheme and programme.

- 6.2 *That authority to refuse planning permission is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning & Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair should the Section 106 Agreement not be completed within the 13week period (which ends on 17 May 2007).*

The reason for refusal would be based on the lack of necessary financial contributions towards improving local services and facilities.