

MARCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs. L.A. Martin B.A.,
Tel: Frilford Heath
(01865) 391833
Email: Clerk@marchamparishcouncil.gov.uk

90 Howard Cornish Road,
Marcham, Abingdon,
Oxon. OX13 6PU

Mr. S. Walker,
Development Control,
Vale of White Horse District Council,
Abbey House,
Abingdon,
Oxon.
OX14 3JE

10th January, 2013

Dear Mr. Walker,

**P12/V2447/FUL Erection of 19 dwellings and associated garages, roads and open space
Land north of Priory Lane, Marcham
For: Manor Oak Homes Ltd**

The Parish Council has voted to object to the application. There have been two previously refused applications on part of the site which is subject to the current application, one of those also refused on appeal. At that time, albeit 18 years ago, the Parish Council stated that “the character of the site on which the development is being proposed is an important visual and natural amenity for the village. As an undeveloped site it contributes significantly to the physical structure and character of the village. The site is directly in line of view from the A415 entering Marcham and impacts on everyone passing. Development here, would devalue the character of Marcham” This statement is still very true and valid today. The open area, south of the A415 plays an important part in creating the rural feel and adds to the importance of The Priory and its setting.

Two issues referred to by the Vale of White Horse District Council in its screening of the sites submitted under the Interim Housing Supply Policy was the impact that such a development would have on the conservation area, and the fact that it would extend the built up area of the village over the A415. The Parish Council would support the comments of the District Council’s conservation officer regarding the significant role that the undeveloped parcel of land has on the rural context, and the impact that such a development would have on the Priory complex.

The proposed access to the site is off the outer edge of a 90° bend on the A415. There is a constant volume of all types of traffic including private cars, vans, lorries, buses, coaches, Army transporters going to and from Dalton Barracks and HGVs. The traffic using this “A” road is both East and West bound. The access is proposed at a point where there is restricted

visibility. Traffic travelling Eastwards turning into the site would be obliged to pause to give way to vehicles travelling Westwards. There would be lack of adequate visibility around the bend. Given the volume of traffic each day which amounts to several thousand vehicles, queues would quickly form around the tight bends in the centre of the village. This is at a point where there is no footway and pedestrians can be in the road. Similarly vehicles leaving the proposed development site intending to turn Eastwards would not have sufficient sight lines to make exiting an easy and safe manoeuvre. You will be aware of the plans for a Marcham By Pass. The Authorities have already agreed for the need to divert the traffic away from the pinch points and bends. This development proposal will add to the existing problems.

The bus stops for Abingdon, Oxford and Wantage are on the northern side of the village. Similarly crossing the A415 road for pedestrians, particularly north to south, will be fraught with dangers. As stated above, there is no visibility around the bends in the road. It is extremely unlikely that those on foot would walk several hundred metres out of their way to a safer crossing point with traffic lights.

It is noted that the Countryside Officer states that the field does not contain any rare or protected species. It may be correct that there are no species specifically protected by legislation other than the bats in the area, but the field has been open meadow for a considerable number of years and has numerous identifiable wild flowers, birds and butterflies throughout the seasons. As such the habitat area is worthy of preservation. It is difficult to see how losing the meadow and replacing it with bricks, concrete and tarmac will enhance the site for biodiversity.

Drainage was an issue raised with the Parish Council by local residents. It is interesting to note that Thames Water Utilities Ltd does not appear on the District Council's website as a consultee. There have been recent problems with the pumping station in Marcham and tankers have been used to transport waste to Gozzards Ford Treatment Works. You will recall in the application for housing in the Anson field, Thames Water Utilities identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of that application. It is understood that the public sewer is at capacity and there are 4 houses at CotSDale, plus 8 houses at The Croft, all of which have recently connected into it. Serious doubts exist as to the ability of the sewage system to be able to satisfactorily accommodate any more new dwellings. Thames Water Utilities was consulted by the Vale of White Horse District Council as part of the site screening process under the proposed Interim Housing Supply Policy. Its response, as far as any further development in Marcham was concerned, was that the capacity of the Gozzards Ford Pumping Station would require checking as Thames Water Utilities itself had doubts.

Equally surface water too could present a problem. Priory Lane itself is very low lying and suffers from flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. Water has entered the cottage at the end of the lane (no. 5) in times past. The Council is not convinced that the proposed drainage system at the Eastern end of the field would fully compensate for the loss of the permeable drainage area. Although the field slopes down to the East, the section of the field to the West is substantially higher than Priory Lane, and no. 5 Priory Lane is actually below the level of the road itself. There is the potential to increase flood risk to these properties and a development of this scale on this site would put existing properties at risk.

Marcham is in the process of undertaking a Community Led Plan. A questionnaire has been

circulated around parishioners and initial analysis of the responses to questions on housing indicates that out of 980 adults who responded, 473 wish there to be no more housing built in Marcham over the next 10 years, and a further 233 wish there to be no more than 20 new houses built over the next 10 years. Thus 72% of residents want an average of no more than 2 new houses built each in the village. It is clear that building 19 houses in a single development would be contrary to the expressed wishes of a large majority of the village.

Should the Vale of White Horse District Council be minded to grant consent then protection for residents should be afforded somehow, to ensure that the developer and utility authorities have responsibility should there be surcharging with sewage or problems caused by surface water flooding.

The Parish Council has received comments from local residents regarding the proposed materials and overlooking. The materials chosen include black wood. The area comprises lighter coloured materials such as stone and buff brick. Again, if the Vale of White Horse District Council is minded to grant consent then the Parish Council would request that the materials be predominantly cotswold stone.

The rights of way footpath across the field has existing disability access gates at either end, funded and provided by the Parish Council. Should the development be granted consent, then there is a requirement to ensure that there is continued access for the disabled and those with mobility scooters.

The Parish Council has received comments from the owners of 2 The Green and 1 Priory Lane regarding the impact on their properties. Consideration should be given to redesigning the orientation to prevent overlooking and loss of existing amenity.

The Parish Council has been working recently with the County Council to provide a crossing point over the A415 near to the junctions of North Street and Mill Road. Whilst some funding is available to provide a zebra crossing, the preference of residents is for a pelican crossing. Again should consent for the development be granted, then highway funding from the scheme under any s. 106 agreement should be allocated specifically for the village of Marcham

Also of concern is the fact that the village primary school is already full to capacity, so that this development would mean that some local youngsters will be unable to attend their local school. The scale of any s106 funds for education is not likely to provide sufficient additional classroom space for the number of extra children. This would suggest that the proposal is not sustainable since it would do demonstrable harm to the existing community.

However, in conclusion the Parish Council objects to the application owing to

- the development's impact on the entrance point to the village, the setting of The Priory and conservation area
- the fact that it is not in the existing built up area of the village
- the access point onto the A415 and the impact for the safety of pedestrians crossing and vehicles both entering and leaving the site together with the knock on effect on existing traffic flows on the A415.
- the impact on the wildlife and general environment
- the effect on the drainage and increased flood potential
- the loss of amenity, overshadowing and impact on existing dwellings.