

## **COMMENTS FROM MARCHAM COMMUNITY GROUP ON PLANNING APPLICATION P12/V0854**

Planning Officer: Mr Stuart Walker

**The application is for building 51 houses on the Anson Field in Marcham and new leisure facilities on land north of Hyde Copse.**

- Through a process of extended consultation with residents and user groups, Marcham Community Group (MCG) has established that there is a strong need for community facilities, which has been difficult to fulfil since closure of the Institute in 2004.
- Whilst there is no strong desire in the community for more housing in Marcham, this proposal would allow a new facility appropriate to the needs of the community to be built in the near future.
- Compared with other potential plans coming forward under the IHSP, this proposal is the only one offering a clear community benefit.
- MCG therefore supports this proposal as an acceptable compromise solution to the funding and delivery of a new community facility.
- There are details of the internal layout of the proposed community building that require amendment to make the facility properly meet community needs. Active discussions among MCG, user groups and the developer on internal layout adjustments are making good progress. The modifications recommended are likely to involve some changes to the positions and sizes of doors and windows, and possibly minor changes to the footprint.
- Feedback from MCG consultations also strongly emphasises the need for the expansion of Marcham Primary School to cope with the increased demand for places that any new development of the size proposed would inevitably cause. The additional classrooms Taylor Wimpey proposes to build must be part of any planning approval.
- MCG is aware that the proposed scheme involves building more new houses than is permitted under existing policies on a site within the village, but believes that the special circumstances in Marcham warrant regarding this proposal as an allowable exception (Policy H11).
- MCG believes that this proposal complies with other applicable planning policies (CF1, CF2, GS5, L1, L7 and L8), given the particular circumstances in Marcham.
- For the past six months MCG has taken on the role of facilitating the consultation on the proposals for new community facilities. Further details are in Appendix 1. MCG's origin and aims are set out in Section 8 of the Statement of Community Involvement in the Application documents. For convenience, the relevant paragraphs are attached as Appendix 2.



## Appendix 1

### Marcham Community Group's role in community consultation on the proposed community building

1. Marcham Community Group (MCG) is a membership organisation founded a little over two years ago. It is a registered charity and registered company limited by guarantee, and has over 300 local members.
2. For the past six months MCG has taken on the role of facilitating the detailed consultation on the proposed community building. MCG has always encouraged wide community participation in the process. In November 2011 the membership decided to accept an invitation from the Anson Trust to contribute to the design specification for the building. Recognising that the proposals might get planning permission, MCG took the view that it was in everyone's interests to avoid the village being left with an unsuitable community building that would not meet local needs and would be unable to meet its running costs.
3. When it became clear early this year that, despite the earlier input provided by various village groups, the proposed revised layout was still unsuitable, MCG offered to facilitate a wider consultation within the village. This culminated in a Users Forum at the end of February that led to detailed recommendations on the layout of the building.
4. This process is continuing with the cooperation of Taylor Wimpey and the Anson Trust. The internal layout of the community building shown in the application still needs some modifications. MCG arranged a second Users Forum on 9 May to consider these in detail. The meeting reached a consensus on a number of changes and we have made detailed proposals based on these to Taylor Wimpey and the Anson Trust. The recommended modifications are likely to involve some changes to the positions and sizes of doors and windows, and possibly minor changes to the footprint.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Asher', is located above the printed name.

Jim Asher

Chairman, Marcham Community Group (for the Directors)



## Appendix 2

### Extract from Section 8 of the Statement of Community Involvement in the Application documents

#### 8.0 Marcham Community Group

8.1 The Marcham Community Group (MCG) have assisted in the evolution of the detailed design proposals for the building by aiding the Anson Trust and TWO in the evolving design of the replacement community hub.

8.2 The MCG have been an integral part of the consultation process in evolving the detailed design solution for the development. They have used their local knowledge and experience to assist in informing the development proposals. For the sake of clarity it is important to state that whilst the MCG have been involved in the design evolution they have stated at all times that they will not wish to prejudice their position should their members wish for them to object to the development proposals.

8.3 To understand the role of the MCG regard has been had to the 'About Marcham Community Group' section of their website. That states:

*'Marcham has been without a useable village hall since September 2004 when its 100-year-old village hall, The Institute, was closed by its owner, the Anson Trust. The Trust was set up by the sisters of Arthur Anson, the original benefactor of the hall and the village playing field, and was given an endowment of property in the village. Over the years the property portfolio was run down and eventually the Anson Trust ran out of funds to keep the Institute open. Since then the Trust has been trying to use its remaining assets, the village-centre Institute and playing field, to create new facilities for the village. It believes its only option is to sell part of these to a developer and use the proceeds to build and endow new facilities on the edge of the village. In August 2011 the Trust announced that it had reached an agreement with Taylor Wimpey Oxfordshire to sell half of the playing field for housing development.'*

Statement of Community Involvement – Anson Field and Hyde Copse, Marcham (p.28)

## Appendix 2 continued

*'Marcham Community Group first came together informally in the spring of 2010 when a number of people felt that there were other ways of providing community recreation and leisure facilities and that more options would be available to a community charitable organisation capable of independent fundraising. MCG is now a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Membership is open to all local residents for a low annual subscription.*

*'Although MCG has community leisure facilities as its aim it is concerned with more than bricks and mortar. When the Institute closed many of the communal events in the village that depended on using it were discontinued. Through its fundraising events and information meetings MCG is actively encouraging the revival of some of the social life the village has lost.*

*'Marcham Community Group represents community views through its members who elect the directors at each AGM and vote on resolutions. Members can also take part directly in MCG activities by joining a working group and/or standing for election as directors. On important issues, and to report back to members and seek their views, MCG also holds open meetings to which non-members are welcome.*

- 8.4 The MCG has a membership of 313 (March 2012) and the Directors of the MCG have assisted TWO and the Anson Trust in designing the detailed proposals for the development.<sup>7</sup>
- 8.5 The report attached at appendix 6 follows the MCG facilitating the consultation process on a revised plan with a 'Users Forum'. The MCG consulted with a number of user groups in Marcham to understand the plans and whether the suggested facilities would meet the needs of their activity. The report summarises the feedback collected by the MCG and the comments have assisted in informing the final layout of the application proposals.