

**PLANNING STATEMENT**

**PRIORY LANE  
MARCHAM**

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**ON BEHALF OF  
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**APRIL 2013**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the development of the site to provide eighteen dwellings, garages, an access road, and associated works and public open space on land north of Priory Lane, Marcham.
- 1.2 This Statement will describe the application site and its context, refer to the relevant planning history, describe the proposal in detail and consider the merits of the scheme with reference to the relevant planning policy framework and other material considerations.

## **2.0 THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDING CONTEXT**

- 2.1 The application site comprises of a parcel of land that is currently a part of the larger Marcham Priory estate. Marcham Priory itself is a large, detached dwellinghouse that stands to the south of the site, sitting within its own curtilage grounds.
- 2.2 The application site is broadly rectangular in shape and runs to approximately 0.89ha and is essentially a greenfield site, in informal paddock type use. A public footpath (to be diverted by a slight realignment) runs through the site, dissecting it in a diagonal fashion on a south west to north east axis. Surrounding the site on three of its sides (north, west and east) are existing residential properties and their domestic curtilages, while to the east, it is lined by Priory Lane, a private road that leads on to Marcham Priory. Priory Lane itself takes its access off Packhorse Lane, the main (A415) road that runs through Marcham village from east to west. The site sits outside the village conservation area, but is adjacent to it to the north and west.
- 2.3 Being flanked on three sides by existing residential properties and bounded by an existing road on the other, the site is plainly a site that stands within the built up area of the village envelope and appears as a natural and logical infill site, contained within the settlement boundary.

### 3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 There is one previous planning application on the site to draw upon, along with a good deal of recent other planning related history that is properly relevant to the considerations of this planning application.

3.2 Section 5.0 of this Statement will set out in full detail the relevant planning policy framework, including a detailed analysis of what is set out below in the following paragraph. Suffice to offer a short commentary only then at this juncture which briefly sets the planning scene to come.

3.3 The Vale of White Horse District Council (the Council) has a long standing and ongoing housing numbers shortfall problem. As part of a solution to this problem, the Council invited land owners in 2011 to submit to them potential sites across the Vale for consideration for new housing developments. As part of this process (known as the Interim Housing Supply Policy) the application site was duly submitted for such consideration (for a 'screening opinion' as it was known in this process).

3.4 The consequence of this process and the end screening opinion offered by the Council to the application site in July of 2012 was:-

- The site was deemed by the Council to be “inside the built up area” of Marcham:
- To be a site “without high level constraints”; and
- That it “may impact upon the conservation area”

3.5 So, confirmation from the Council that the application site was indeed considered to lie within the exiting village settlement and that it was a site without any high level constraints to its potential housing developments. Whilst a caveat was expressed concerning possible impact to the adjoining conservation area, this was not deemed to be a significant constraint to development and the consequent, careful design of the proposed scheme is arrived at most mindful of any possible conservation area impact in any event.

- 3.6 The salient point of this cited planning process being that the Council evidently consider the application site to be one which can reasonably be considered for some residential development. Hence now this application and indeed, its predecessor.
- 3.7 For the record, the predecessor application on this site (application reference: P12/V2447/FUL) was a similar application to this latest one and involved a residential development of the site for 19 no. units, not 18 no. as now proposed. That previous planning application was withdrawn in February 2013 prior to its determination, in the main because the Council raised an 'in principle' objection to the impact of the then proposed development on the listed setting of Marcham Priory. There were some other lesser concerns too that centred on the particular scheme layout, the position of affordable housing of the site and neighbour impact from one of the plots.
- 3.8 Following that application's withdrawal, the applicant entered into a pre-application process with the Council's case planning officer (Mr. Walker) and conservation officer (Mr. Audley-Miller), which has now resulted in the submission of this application. The scheme was revised to positively address and overcome the Council's concern to the listed setting of Marcham Priory , and revised in its layout and form overall (including the removal of one housing unit) to address too the other, previously raised concerns. The culmination of the pre-application process found the officers in support of the draft application (now the submitted application).

#### **4.0 THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 The proposal basically involves the construction of eighteen dwellings on the site, in a mix of detached (7 units), link detached (4 units), semis (4 units), and a small terrace (3 units), ranging from 2 to 5 beds. All of the houses would be a conventional 2 storeys in height and all designed in a vernacular manner, with architectural features and materials typical of their Marcham village setting. The majority of the properties (12 units) come with their own garages and forecourt parking space(s), whilst the others (7 units) are provided with parking alone spaces. 7 of the units out of the 19 total are

provided on an affordable housing basis. Each of the properties are also provided with their own ample and private garden spaces.

4.2 Vehicular access in to the site is taken as existing via Priory Lane, off Packhorse Lane. The Priory Lane/Packhorse Lane junction is suitably modified to accommodate the extra traffic generation and Priory Lane itself is upgraded to suit also. A new, internal site access road is then taken off Priory Lane running down into the site on a broadly south west to north east axis to follow as it best can the existing footpath line across its site, and to maintain this publically accessible route as part and parcel of a slight footpath diversion in effect. Pedestrian access then links out onto the other section of Priory Lane at the South West corner of the site. At either end of the pedestrian route through the site (in the south west and north east corners) two large areas of public open are provided.

4.3 A landscape management plan will be applied to the site in order to make best use of opportunities for boundary planting in particular, in order to assist further the assimilation of the site into its existing village setting

## **5.0 PLANNING POLICY AND MAIN PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **The Legislative Framework**

5.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that in the determination of applications “The Authority shall have regard to the provisions of a development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material consideration.”

5.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires planning applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.3 The Development Plan in this instance comprises of the South East Plan (adopted May 2009) and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (adopted June 2006).

### **The South East Plan**

- 5.4 The South East Plan is however a generic document that is revoked in virtually its entire extent, except for two saved policies that are not considered directly relevant to the full and proper consideration of the application, I will therefore draw upon, in due course, the relevant policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (VWHLP) policies saved by a direction of the Secretary of State pursuant to paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in the consideration of this Statement.

### **National Planning Policy**

- 5.5 Government level planning guidance relevant to the consideration of this application is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012

#### **NPPF**

- 5.6 The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied (paragraph 1).
- 5.7 The NPPF sets out that “the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development” (paragraph 6). There are three identified dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental (paragraph 7). These three roles are mutually dependant and considered together, can secure higher social and environmental standards, well designed buildings and places that can improve the lives of people and communities (paragraph 8).
- 5.8 In the first place then, it is submitted that the development of an available, windfall site acknowledged by VWHDC to lie within Marcham village, making good use of it and providing much needed family housing, in a carefully and sensitively designed development, must reasonably be considered to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the village. The additional housing will bring more people and spending capacity into the village and include a significant element of socially based affordable housing

too, to better sustain village amenities and widen the source of potential housing choice in the village. The cross economic, social and environmental benefits are obvious.

- 5.9 Paragraph 10 makes clear that planning decisions “need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas”. This is just the case in point here where an available, developable site exists within the village and where the opportunity exists to develop it for residential use including affordable housing, bringing positive gains fully across the three dimensions of the Government’s view of ‘sustainable development’.
- 5.10 Indeed, “at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking” (paragraph 14). It goes on to state that for plan making this means that local authorities should positively seek opportunities that arise to meet the development needs for their area and that local planning policies should be applied flexibly whenever possible. It is submitted here that the package of benefits that accrue from this proposal, particularly in terms of the range of housing supplied and the housing numbers involved, plainly represent a positive development opportunity for both the local area and the wider District area as a whole, and that this development should properly be supported.
- 5.11 Paragraph 15 of the NPPF is explicit in its Statement that “policies in local plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay”. It has already been demonstrated above that the proposal does plainly represent a sustainable form of development, by definition.
- 5.12 A list of twelve “core planning principles” within the planning system are then identified in the NPPF, that should “underpin both plan making and decision taking” (paragraph 17). Those considered most relevant to the terms of this proposal include:



- “empower local people to shape their surroundings;
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and

The application proposal and its related benefits satisfy the above criterion.

5.13 In rural areas specifically such as Marcham, the NPPF requires (at paragraph 28) that planning policies should be applied positively in order to “support a prosperous rural economy”, specifically assisting the “retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages such as local shops, meeting places” etc. Plainly, the redevelopment of an available, developable site within the village turning into a potentially thriving development of 18 new family homes can only be seen in a positive light in this consideration.

5.14 In order “to boost significantly the supply of housing” and choice of high quality homes, local planning authorities are required to maintain an up to date and deliverable supply of 5 years worth of housing against their housing requirements, “with an additional buffer” of 5% - 20% even, now required too in order “to ensure choice and competition in the market for land” (paragraph 47). The Council do not have such an up to date 5 year housing supply however on a District wide basis and the proposal at hand assists positively

with their ongoing deficit. Let me explain. To do this fully in fact, I first need to go backwards to then move forwards through to the current housing position.

- 5.15 In October 2011, the Council published an Interim Housing Supply Policy (IHSP) for public consultation. The intention of the IHSP was to relax certain planning policies contained within the VWHLP in an effort to bring forward land to accommodate some 1,000 houses in the short term to rectify an acknowledged and identified shortfall in the Council's 5 year land supply.
- 5.16 However, the Council announced in a statement presented to Full Council on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012, that it could no longer pursue the IHSP for 2 reasons. First, paragraph 49 of the NPPF states *inter alia* that "...relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites". The Council could no longer rely on the policies contained in the VWHLP that the IHSP had intended to relax. And, second, the introduction of new planning regulations in the form of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012, which required, at Regulations 5 and 6, any Council policy that encourages development or identifies sites, to be prepared as a local plan.
- 5.17 So, in short, the IHSP process was set aside, but not before the results of the IHSP site screening process were published and where the application site at hand was defined as being within the existing village settlement and was deemed a site that did not suffer from a high level of constraints to prevent its development (refer back to Section 3.0 of this statement).
- 5.18 Returning then to a study of the most up to date information available from the Council sets out that for the current period (1 April 2013 – 31 March 2018) the Council has a District wide housing land supply of only 3.3 years. This is significantly short of the 5 year housing supply requirements set out in the NPPF. It is nowhere near the 5 year requirement in fact, let alone plus the addition of a further possible 20% buffer too that the NPPF looks to impose upon Councils with an ongoing record of under supply of housing.

- 5.19 Looking forwards and without specific intervention through eg. the now abandoned IHSP to bring sites forward in advance of the emerging Core Strategy, (itself not set to be in place until sometime in 2014 at earliest) the Council's 5 year land supply is likely to remain deficient until at least 2014 then at which point the strategic allocations in the Core Strategy may begin to contribute towards the rolling housing supply. However, at this point the Council is currently reliant on strategic allocations proposed within the emerging Core Strategy to return its housing land supply to a healthy position.
- 5.20 That of course, does not absolve the Council of its NPPF requirement to deliver an up to date 5 year housing land supply today. It can not meet this requirement. However, there is an opportunity here to provide 18 units, including 7 affordable, towards the Councils shortfall supply, which are available and ready for delivery upon the grant of planning permission. This must clearly be accorded significant weight as a material planning consideration in the circumstances of this case.
- 5.21 Continuing on then with other aspects of the NPPF, it "attaches great importance to the design of the built environment" and considers that "good design is a key aspect of sustainable development" and is "indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people" (paragraph 56). The application scheme in its careful and vernacular design treatment of the proposed development most is mindful of its context and setting in this part of the village, both in relation to the listed setting of Marcham Priory and its position adjacent to the conservation area. Cross reference to the detailed design aspects of the scheme continues in the Design & Access Statement produced by RGP Architects.
- 5.22 The NPPF requires that planning decisions should aim to ensure new developments deliver high quality schemes, judged across a range of fronts (paragraph 58), as indeed the proposal delivers:
- "will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development;
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

The proposed development is carefully designed to comply fully with all of these requirements.

5.23 Paragraph 61 then goes on to say that although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural built and historic environment. The proposed scheme is fully integrated with its place

### **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011**

5.24 The VWHLP contains a number of saved policies related to the proper consideration of this application.

### **Principle of Residential Development**

- 5.25 Marcham finds itself defined and listed as one of the 'larger villages' in the District and is categorised for new residential developments under the terms of Policy H11 of the VWHLP.
- 5.26 The VWHLP sets out that "housing in the villages listed in Policy H11 will be limited to sites within their built-up areas which can be developed in a way which safeguards their character", (paragraph 8.56). It has already been set out above that the Council regard the site as being within Marcham, so the principle of this development is compliant with Policy H11. This matter was further endorsed through the pre-application process.
- 5.27 Whilst Policy H11 does set out that it is permissive towards new housing development on sites of 'up to about 0.5 ha' and 'not more than 15 dwellings', it does not rule out consideration of larger sites (such as this site) or those in excess of 15 dwellings (such as this site). Indeed, in August 2012 the Council resolved to grant planning permission subject to completion of a Section 106 agreement for a development of 50+ dwellings on a site well in excess of 0.5ha elsewhere in Marcham (on the sports ground site). So there is a very recent example of new development in Marcham being found acceptable by the Council that sits outside the stated terms (in both site size and unit numbers) of policy H11. The land here at Priory Lane is no different and equally acceptable in principle.
- 5.28 Moreover of course, consideration of the principle of the residential development of the site falls within the ambit of the Council's 5 year housing land supply position. As set out in full above, the Council is in large deficit and there is no need here to repeat all that has been said on this matter. Suffice to say that the NPPF (paragraph 46) makes clear that new housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that, in particular, where a 5 year housing supply cannot be demonstrated, that the relevant policies in the local plan for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. This is the case here.
- 5.29 Whilst it is fair to say that this does not give the green light to all possible new housing developments, it does positively promote those new housing

developments which find themselves in an acknowledged sustainable location, such as Marcham in this case. A village defined by the local Council as one of its 'larger' villages, where new housing development is positively advocated and on a site in this case too which the Council have already considered to stand within the village itself.

- 5.30 The principle of the residential development of this site, in all of these circumstances, should reasonably be an accepted given and indeed it has been during the course of the pre-application process as stated.

### **Design & Character**

- 5.31 Policy DC1 of the VWHLP states that development will be permitted provided that (i) it is of high quality design and inclusive design such that the layout, scale, massing, height detailing, materials used and its relationship to adjoining buildings and open space do not adversely affect those attributes that make a positive contribution to the character of the locality and (ii) it takes into account local distinctiveness and character either in a modern or traditional interpretation
- 5.32 The Design & Access Statement which accompanies this application explains in detail the design philosophy behind this scheme and contains a contextual analysis of the site and its environs in this part of the village and how the scheme has evolved through the pre-application process. This in turn served to adduce a proposed scheme which reflects the building tradition in this part of the village and is evident in the scale, type and form of the resultant, new dwellings, in a relatively low density development that is typical of the surrounding density and character of existing development.
- 5.33 Also underpinning the scheme design is a Heritage Appraisal of the site, most mindful of the sites location both in terms of its relationship to the listed Marcham Priory and its position adjoining in part the Marcham Conservation Area. That Appraisal also contains an analysis of the potential 'impact' of the proposal to the setting of the Conservation Area and concludes quite rightly, that there would be no material harmful effect, and that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, (as

required by Policy HE1 of the VWHLP). It also concludes quite properly, that the latest proposal has no impact, is neutral only, in relation to the setting of the listed Marcham Priory

- 5.34 In brief, it would be correct to say that the site is a relatively contained one, bordered by residential properties on three sides and the existing Priory Lane access to the other. The proposed site layout reinforces this containment and produces a scheme that is worked around the retention of the public footpath route that runs across the site, utilising and maintaining that route as a new internal access road. It also (compared to the previously withdrawn scheme) opens up the site frontage and steps back from the access track to Marcham Priory, retaining long views to the Priory from the main site entrance. The general scale, layout and appearance of the new dwellings typify the mix of property types and layouts characteristic in the village. This is all compliant with the terms of Policy DC1.

### **Landscaping & Ecology**

- 5.35 Policy DC6 of the VWHLP requires all proposals for new developments to include hard and soft landscaping measures which are designed to (i) protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site and its surroundings, and (ii) maximise the opportunities for nature conservation and wildlife habitat creation.
- 5.36 The application is accompanied by a detailed landscaping scheme that includes new planting where opportunities permit, along with retention and enhancement of all the site boundaries. Indeed, the planting scheme reinforces the existing site boundaries and positively assists to assimilate the new development within its contained, edge of village setting.
- 5.37 The Ecological Report accompanying the application indicates that the site is of low biodiversity interest. Existing planting is retained wherever possible in the development scheme and extensive new indigenous planting (trees/hedges) is to be put in place which will enhance the biodiversity interest of the land.

### **Neighbourliness**

- 5.38 Policy DC9 of the VWHLP seeks to ensure that new development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight, visual intrusion, noise, smell, dust etc.
- 5.39 The scheme is carefully designed to be neighbourly all round (both within and outside the site) and to reflect the same, relative spacious density of existing housing in the area and the same building-to-building separations. The nearest proposed unit (unit 9) to the properties to the north in The Green is only 2 storey in height with an end on gable facing relationship which itself contains no facing windows at all and there are more than reasonable building separation distances such that no material issues of privacy or light impact accrue. It has been specifically redesigned (from the withdrawn scheme) through the pre-application process to ensure it is neighbourly.
- 5.40 To the west, the nearest property in Priory Lane is around 12m distant, and again the nearest proposed unit (unit 8) is 2 storey only with an end on, blank gable wall facing relationship. There are no neighbour impact issues in this relationship. Similarly, to the south unit 7 is at closest point towards 10m distant from the nearest house, and then only on a perpendicular building to building arrangement, not face on at all, and only 2 storeys of course.
- 5.41 In light of all of these building separation distances the careful design of the new units themselves in relation, and the opportunities for landscaping to the common boundaries, it is submitted that there would be no harmful neighbour impact that arises from this development.

### **Access and Car Parking**

- 5.42 Policy DC5 of the VWHLP looks to ensure that new residential development provides for safe and convenient access, including adequate provision of on plot car parking.



5.43 A Transport Statement accompanies this application and assesses the full range of potential on and off site highway, access and car parking considerations. Only brief comment is therefore required here. Priory Lane is an existing single track access off the main Packhorse Lane through the village. Adequate visibility exists already at the access junction on the main road such that the additional traffic generated by this development can be safely accommodated. Nevertheless, junction improvements are proposed, along with the trimming back of the adjacent hedgerow to the east of the access, to improve visibility still further. Within the site, Priory Lane is upgraded to permit for 2 way traffic and the new site access road facilitates ready access to each of the 18 units, 11 of these units are provided with their own garage and forecourt parking, with 7 of the units having forecourt parking alone. Parking numbers across the site are to an accepted standard.

### **Affordable Housing**

5.44 Policy H17 of the VWHLP expects that 40% of the dwellings on all sites of more than 5 units in settlements like Marcham should be provided as affordable housing units.

5.45 In this case, 7 of the 18 units are proposed on an affordable basis, which meets the 40% policy requirement. The applicant would be content to be bound by any reasonable legal agreement to ensure that these 7 units are brought forward on a suitable affordable basis and that they are then available in perpetuity as affordable housing for local people as deemed appropriate by the Council. The 7 units are provided on the site in two separate locations. 5 no. of the units (9-13), grouped together at the western end of the site and 2 no. of the units (16 and 17) are provided to the eastern end of the site. They are designed in a complementary fashion to the other market properties on the site, so that they would appear as indistinguishable in their design appearance from the other properties. This would assist their ready and seamless integration into the overall site and the wider village community.

### **Public Open Space**

- 5.46 Policy H23 of the VWHLP requires that new housing development on sites of 15+ units should usually provide for 15% of the site area to be laid out as public open space.
- 5.47 In this case, the element of the site shown provided as dedicated public open space is provided in two locations (there was only one location in the previous scheme) at either end of the site which equates to a x % provision of the overall site area and which is appropriate for the nature and scale of the proposed scheme. This space is located and designed within the site to be surrounded by a combination of proposed and existing housing, such that it would have a good degree of natural, passive surveillance from the surrounding houses and so be safe to use. There is already access to both these areas both from within the site and from outside of the site too at the point where the existing public footpath exits out onto Priory Lane and Packhorse Lane respectively such that they would function as most convenient spaces. This is all as Policy H23 requires.

### **Flooding**

- 5.48 A Flood Risk Assessment accompanies this application and it concludes that the site is not at flood risk.

### **Deliverability**

- 5.49 The application site is ready and available for immediate development upon the grant of planning permission. To this end, the applicant is willing to be bound by a 12 month time limited planning consent and a 3 month period within which to complete any required section 106 agreement. This will ensure the deliverability of the site in a swift and ready fashion, to provide on the ground the housing numbers required by the District Council immediately.

## **6.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The proposal comprises of the residential development of an available site within the existing village of Marcham, which the Council consider is a site without proper constraints to development.

- 6.2 It is a windfall site, that positively assists the Council with its 5 year housing land supply shortfall.
- 6.3 It is a site that is immediately deliverable upon the grant of planning permission.
- 6.4 It would provide for 7 affordable housing units in this, countryside village location and help meet local housing needs.
- 6.5 It also provides for a range of family orientated market houses too, that assist with the overall well being of the village.
- 6.6 It is a well designed, characterful scheme, which is neighbourly all round and does not harm the setting of the adjacent conservation area nor the listed Marcham Priory.
- 6.7 It is a scheme which has undergone a careful and rigorous pre-application process with the Council's planning and conservation officer's and re-designed through that process to meet their requirements.
- 6.8 In the clear circumstances identified herein, the proposal is compliant with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan and the NPPF and should properly be supported. Accordingly, it is very much hoped that the planning consent applied for in this development can be straightforwardly granted.