

# Church Street Development of 50 Houses

Outline planning permission was granted by The Regulation Committee of South Somerset District Council, at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018, for up to 50 houses on Church Street in Merriott. This was, despite The Area West Committee, which met to consider this application on October 17<sup>th</sup>, recommending refusal for a number of reasons, including.

The proposed scheme would result in an unsustainable form of development

Unacceptable scale of growth which would undermine the Local Plan

Adverse harm to the school

Contrary to Policies, SD1, SS1, SS2, SS6, TA4, HW1, EQ2, EQ4, and Chapters 2, 15 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Iain Hall, Chairman of The Parish Council spoke at Area West against the application. In summary his comments were,

Merriott Parish Council had already supported several significant planning applications recently, however if this one went ahead it would mean a total increase of 194 dwellings in the village, some 22% growth, more than the 17% required in the whole of South Somerset and this was considered too much in a Rural Settlement with no specific growth target.

Development on this site would be detrimental to the Street Scene and Landscape.

The application did not comply with planning policy SS2 which requires developments in Rural Settlements to provide either ;

Affordable Housing to supply a demonstrated local need.

Employment opportunities.

A community facility or service.

The application did not demonstrate local support.

I also spoke against the application. My comments can be summarised as follows. The fields, hedge and bank form an integral part of the street scene and would be obliterated by this proposed development. I referred to a strong letter of objection from The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and in particular how this rural edge of the village connected to the wider landscape and beyond. I highlighted that the site was a greenfield site and had always been designated for no development in the Village Plan and Local Plan. I made reference to the wildlife, ecological and landscape importance of the site. I mentioned that Merriott is designated as a Rural Settlement in the Local Plan and that a 25% growth in a few years was significant and too much for the village to absorb. I also referred to the recent Housing Needs survey, which this application did not accord with. I explained that the school would be taken over capacity by this proposal and that in general terms the application was unsustainable and not in accordance with several policies.

The Area West Committee supported my proposal to recommend refusal, however, under the current planning rules, all major applications are referred to Regulation for determination.

Iain Hall and myself attended the Regulation Committee and both spoke, as before, in opposition to this application. We had support from several of the committee members, however a majority voted to approve it, which was extremely disappointing, unbelievable and we both thought that the level of scrutiny and debate was poor.

I have raised this situation with The Leader of The Council and am meeting with her to discuss the way in which this has been handled, the effect on the village of Merriott, its community and environment. I will also be arranging for her to meet with the Parish Council members.

I have always sought to do what is right for Merriott and the community and I am not against all development, however, I was extremely disappointed with the outcome in this case and that is why I am taking it further.

Paul Maxwell

District Councillor.