

10. Conversion of Buildings into 39 Units and Erection of 13 New Dwellings – Land at Tail Mill, Merriott (App No 07/02775/FUL)

Head of Service: Simon Gale, Head of Development and Building Control
Lead Officer: Dave Norris, Planning Team Leader (North and West)
Contact Details: david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462382

Purpose of Report

To present members with a recommendation to amend a resolution that was passed on a planning application at the January Committee.

Recommendation

It is recommended that members vary their previous resolution to that of the previous application that will require the factory extension to be completed and ready for use prior to the occupation of any of the dwellings.

Background

Members will recall that the application was approved in principle at the January meeting of the Area West Committee. Subsequent to the meeting the planning officer has instructed the District Valuer to provide an independent assessment of the applicant's financial submission. The District Valuer will provide a robust report that will assess all of the development costs and the likely financial return on the development. The applicant is agreeable to this 'open-book' process and is furnishing the District Valuer with the required information. The completed assessment will allow the district council to assess whether the profit from the development is just sufficient to provide the new factory extension or whether there can be a requirement for planning infrastructure contributions. It is anticipated that the report will be completed by the beginning of April, subject to the District Valuer having received all the required information from the applicant.

One of the issues that the committee considered was the phasing of the development and it was resolved to change the wording of the S106 agreement to prevent any work commencing on the new-build element of the scheme until the factory had been constructed. The applicant's agent has subsequently contacted the planning officer and raised strong concerns about this requirement. They believe that this phasing will make the entire scheme unviable as the delay between the construction (and funding) of the factory and the occupation of any dwelling will have a significant impact upon cash-flow and will represent an additional risk that will prejudice the applicant's ability to borrow. They have also raised the question as to why the phasing requirement has changed since the last permission was issued 15 months ago.

The applicant's request has been discussed with the Economic Development Team Leader and it is considered that the relaxation of the phasing requirement will not create any additional risk to the District Council and will assist the applicant in achieving funding for this scheme; a scheme that should contribute to the future viability and vitality of this important local company.

Financial Implications

None from this report although the outcome of the District Valuer's assessment may result in planning contributions being received from this development.

Other Implications

None.

Background Papers: *Previous planning report and minutes from the January 2008 Area West Committee meeting.*
