

Additional information relevant to the determination of our application for the modification or discharge of planning obligations.

We are applying for the variation of a Section 106 agreement made together with a planning permission granted in 2013 (12/02126/FUL). The Section 106 agreement was for a period of 10 years. The planning permission allowed for residential development of former farm buildings that had fallen into disrepair, together with the building of new housing, some 24 properties altogether. We are applying to remove that part of the Section 106 agreement which requires the building of a GP surgery and pharmacy on a plot in the centre of the development.

Concurrently with this application we are applying for planning permission to build a residential house and garage on the plot in question.

We believe that the Section 106 agreement should be varied for the following reasons:

After 6 years, South Somerset Planning confirm that the only interest in establishing a Merriott GP practice was shortly after the development was approved. This was from a Crewkerne GP who decided not to proceed and has since retired. Subsequently, a second GP practice has opened in nearby Crewkerne, 10 minutes from Merriott.

There is already an established Merriott pharmacy situated on Broadway. This pharmacy turned down the opportunity to move away from its position on the main thoroughfare, alongside the Co-op store, into a residential development.

We know that there is increasing pressure on NHS funding and a workforce crisis across the country. Rural practices in particular are struggling to recruit doctors when the incumbent retires. Additionally, operational and maintenance costs are high and difficult to meet.

The Royal College of General Practitioners is looking to provide large, multidisciplinary teams of primary care doctors in sites offering a range of ancillary medical services. Sustainability of existing practices is already an issue, as can be seen in nearby Crewkerne where the two GP practices have recently merged. If Crewkerne's West One Practice, with several thousand patients, proved untenable, it seems unlikely that the NHS would fund a GP practice in Merriott with a smaller population.

In addition to the GP centres in Crewkerne, Merriott residents can take advantage of other medical services available nearby: another GP practice in West Coker, cottage hospitals in both Crewkerne and South Petherton and a District Hospital in Yeovil.

As to the site itself. It is situated in a residential area accessed by one side road. The site is too small to provide adequate parking for a surgery and pharmacy. Further, it would create heavy traffic in and out of the development at all times of the day, especially if evening appointments were made available. This would effectively transform the centre of the development into a car park which would be an impediment to the residents' quiet

enjoyment of their homes. Access from Broadway to Orchard Drive is subject to traffic calming measures, which can lead to delays when entering/exiting the development, particularly at peak times. It is not unfeasible to imagine queues of cars at this junction if a surgery was to be built.

The development itself is almost complete. It consists of a variety of housing, mainly with small garden areas and little greenery. In building a single house at its centre we would provide a green space instead of, essentially, a car park. We would plant trees, shrubs and flowers to bring some life to a rather urbanised space. The gardened areas would also link the development to the open field on its northern boundary.

Lastly, we would draw your attention to a legal matter. A restrictive covenant was placed on the land by its former owners, prohibiting use of the land for commercial/business purposes. This restrictive covenant has not been removed and clearly contradicts the GP/Pharmacy provision of the Section 106 agreement.

Ruth and Martin Passey

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