

Minutes of the meeting of Selborne Parish Council held at Selborne Village Hall, High Street, Selborne, GU34 3JR on Thursday 9 March 2017 commencing at 4.00pm



PRESENT: Cllr Dr Ravenscroft in the Chair, Cllr Mrs Palmer (Vice-Chair), Cllrs Miss Clay and Mrs Irwin-Brown. Also present: seventeen members of the public and Mrs sue Hobbs Locum Clerk.

17/045 TO RECEIVE AND ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs Bennett and Earney for personal reasons. A proposal was received, seconded and voted in favour of accepting the apologies received.

RESOLVED: That the apologies received be accepted.

(Power used: Local Government Act 1972 s85)

17/046 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were received.

(Power used: Localism Act 2011 and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulation 2012)

17/047 TO APPROVE DISPENSATIONS FOR DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS UNDER SECTION 33 OF THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Locum Clerk advised this item was not required on this occasion.

17/048 TO RECEIVE RESOLUTION TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDERS TO ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT TO RAISE QUESTIONS ON ISSUES NOT INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA

A proposal was received, seconded and voted in favour of suspending Standing Orders to allow the members of the public present to speak.

RESOLVED: That Standing Orders be suspended to allow the members of the public present to speak.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public enquired whether a view expressed by a District Councillor, that The Queens was not a viable proposition as a public house, was shared by Selborne Parish Council Members. The member of the public commented that a consortium of individuals had expressed an interest in taking over the premises to run as a pub and that key issues included the exclusion of the car park from the prospective development site and the removal of fixtures and fittings.

The Locum Clerk advised that it was possible for community groups to make an application to the district council to exercise the Community Right to Bid under the Localism Act 2011, to take over the running of a community asset. This was still thought possible, but preferably before the end of the planning consultation period, which had been extended to 20 March 2017.

Parking and traffic issues were still seen as serious problems and the planning applicant appeared not to have taken these into consideration, nor proposed any mitigating measures.

A comment was received that there appeared to be little or no interest in the vendor selling the pub as a going concern and that there was no reference to the provision of affordable housing at the site.

The change of use to residential dwellings was also felt to be detrimental to the street scene and that there was a need for a hotel with rooms in the village, which in turn would help revitalise the area, provide employment opportunities and maximise the tourism appeal to visitors to the nearby museum.

It was also highlighted that reference to the size of the site was inconsistent in the marketing material, which was confusing and potentially misleading to prospective purchasers.

An observation was also made that there was no evidence to support the need for more housing of the type proposed at the site. The genuine need for a change of use was questionable.

Members of the public commented that the pub had previously been well run and popular, although it was acknowledged that such premises require proper management, which is not always feasible or achievable.

Some frustration was expressed that the SDNPA website had been temporarily closed on 9 March 2017, which prevented members of the public from accessing documents and planning history information about the application. This was out of Selborne Parish Council's control and unfortunate timing.

A question was raised as to whether Selborne Parish Council had any information whether the planning authority Conservation Officer's objection would be taken into consideration, to which the Chair responded that the parish council did not have access to this information.

There were anomalies identified in the marketing report, particularly with regard to the size of the plot, the number of enquiries made for the site to be purchased as a going concern and both the asking price and alternatively the rent payable, which cast doubt on the validity of the report. Cllr Mrs Palmer agreed to check the detail of the first application for a change of use to a bakery.

A member of the public commented that the rent payable would be set in relation to the profit made, which in turn would have an adverse impact on the viability of the site to be run as a business. However, if the site was to be run as a free house, this would not be relevant and this was highlighted to be a major flaw in the marketing report.

Doubt was expressed that the current owner of the site had purchased it with a view to running it as a hotel and that it had been clearly bought with a view to converting it to residential properties. A member of the public also advised that it was not uncommon for prospective purchasers to be unable to access business accounts.

It was noted that the marketing report should have illustrated that the site had been properly marketed in its original condition, which would have made it potentially more attractive to a buyer wishing to run a free house or an independent hotel. A comparison was drawn to other pubs and restaurants in the neighbouring area, which had been successfully transformed into 'gastro pubs' and were flourishing. It was reiterated that a properly run pub would be a necessary asset to the parish.

Cllr Mrs Palmer had drafted a letter of objection to the application, which the Chair invited her to read out and was well received by the members of the public and Councillors present.

17/049 TO RECEIVE RESOLUTION TO RESUME STANDING ORDERS

A proposal was received, seconded and voted in favour of resuming Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue.

RESOLVED: That Standing Orders be resumed to allow the meeting to continue.

17/050 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(i) SDNP/16/05403 – The Queens Hotel, High Street, Selborne, GU34 3JJ. Change of use from public house (use class A4) to six residential units (use class C3) (five x two bedroomed apartments and one x three bedroomed dwelling) with demolition of single storey structures. Amended drawings received 24 November 2016 (application site boundary). Amended drawings received 14 February 2017. (Response required by 10 March 2017).

The Chair highlighted that the current application included the marketing report and it referred to technical changes to the previous application, but this did not alter the overall proposal. Selborne Parish Council had previously submitted its observations and objections on preceding applications.

Cllr Mrs Palmer proposed that she worked with her fellow Councillors present to construct a response of objection, based on her draft letter, for submission to the Locum Clerk, who would subsequently submit the same as Selborne Parish Council's objection to the application on 10 March 2017. The proposal was seconded and voted in favour by the Councillors present.

SELBORNE PARISH COUNCIL'S LETTER OF OBJECTION SUBMITTED TO EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL 10 MARCH 2017

'Selborne Parish Council wishes to reiterate its objection to the planning application above and to draw your attention to EHDC's pre-application advice, given in July 2015, that stressed the importance of the Queens public house to the village of Selborne and stated that every effort should be made to sustain its future. This advice was sound. The Queens Hotel was not only an important focal point but it also provided the only hotel accommodation in this historic village for the many visitors who come here, attracted by Gilbert White and by the natural beauty of the landscape. The Queens had for many years been a tied house with the resulting restrictions and high rent. With an effective marketing strategy, a buyer could have had the opportunity to run it as a Free House.

'Before considering any change of use of the site or any amended drawings, it is therefore vital first of all to consider whether there ever was any genuine intention on the part of Derek Warwick Developments to market the property as a going concern as a pub and hotel.

'We refer to the Additional Marketing Information (published on the SDNPA website on 3 March 2017) sent on 27 February 2017 by Adam Bullas, a Director of Savills, to Stuart Garnett, another Director of Savills. The Parish Council wishes to point out that Savills was instructed, on behalf of Derek Warwick Developments, to put the Queens on the market on 27 January 2016 and that therefore a sizeable proportion of the Enquiry Log quoted in the letter of 27 February should be disregarded because it predates this instruction. We note that Enquiry Log nos. 66 and 67 are identical and duplicated, bringing the validity of that document into question.

'On page 1 of the letter dated 27 February 2017, it is stated that Savills were instructed to market the property on 27 January 2016. Yet, interestingly, they also say it was advertised in The Pub and Bar Magazine on 4 January 2016. Appendix 5 of the Marketing Strategy appears to show the Queens being marketed on 16 February 2015 @ £850k with a site area of 0.492 ha which presumably also included the field behind the hotel. The next document advertises the Queens on 30 July 2015 with a site area of only 0.114 ha and Price On Application. In January 2016, it was being marketed with a site area of 0.201 ha and POA again. This is confusing for any potential buyer. With the variations in land areas, it is also very difficult to see how the site could possibly be treated as a planning unit when an application for change of use is to be considered.

'In November 2015, John Townsend had noted in his pre-application advice regarding demolition of the barn that change of use was being considered to residential. As Savills were not instructed until January 2016, this predates the launching of any marketing exercise.

'It seems evident that neither Savills nor Derek Warwick Developments ever intended to 'make every effort to sustain the future of the Queens as a public house' and that Derek Warwick Developments in fact bought the Queens simply for its potential as a development site. Savills' original In-House Sales Particulars, attached as Appendix 3 to the Additional Marketing Information letter, openly states at the outset:

'The Opportunity *The current owner has had plans drawn up to convert and extend the existing public house into two dwellings and then also to sensitively convert and extend the detached barn.'*

'In other words, any genuine intention to sell the Queens as a pub with rooms is brought into question by this statement.

'In April 2016, i.e. within three months of first marketing the property, pre-application advice was requested for change of use from public house A4 to a bakers shop at ground floor A1. Within a further three months, by July 2016, the hotel and pub, that had recently been refurbished and was in sound decorative condition, had been gutted. Four months later, on 31st October 2016, a planning application for Change of Use to residential use was submitted.

'The Parish Council would refer you back to the letter and attachments from a local resident, Mr B C R Smith, written to EHDC on 2 December 2016 and published on the SDNPA website on 6 December. The email trail attached to his letter shows that his enquiry dated 23 April 2016 to Mr Adam Bullas of Savills showed his clear interest in acquiring the Queens and in running it as a pub. To that end, he asked to see the 'financials'. Mr Bullas responded that: "We do not hold any accounting information".

'We say that any vendor wishing to sell a commercial venture would as a matter of course either provide accounting information as an essential document within the sales pack or ensure that accounting information was readily available to any prospective buyer. The absence of such information in this case speaks volumes about Derek Warwick Developments' intentions as regards the future of the Queens.

'In his email conversations with Mr Smith, Mr Bullas changes the price dramatically a number of times as well as changing the extent of the area for sale. In April 2015, an offer had been accepted for £675k for the property. Solicitors were instructed but the purchaser pulled out. In April 2016, Mr Smith had been talking 'high 6's / low 7's' with Mr Bullas who responded that Savills could sell the Queens to him 'for £725k but on a reduced site basis' (i.e. without the car parking area). When this potential buyer said he would need the car park as he wanted to continue to run a restaurant, Savills raised the price for the whole site to £1.15m.

'No buyer could be expected to proceed to a formal offer in these circumstances. Indeed these actions throw doubt on Savills whole marketing strategy. We do not know how many other potential buyers may have been given similar treatment and may consequently have been put off making an offer for the Queens, although we do know of a consortium of local people that also wanted to purchase the hotel but were put off doing so when they heard that the car park would not be included in the sale. The gutting of the Queens and the stripping of all its pub features by July 2016, prior to submitting a planning application for change of use in October, provided a further deterrent to anyone wishing to purchase the Queens and to run it as a public house and hotel.

'Notwithstanding the marketing issues and the cloud of uncertainty surrounding the validity of the planning application for Change of Use, it is disappointing that the revised plans still fail to address the lack of affordable housing on the site. Affordable housing is required by local planning policy and by Government Guidance for English National Parks (Circular 2010).

'Stuart Garnett in his letter to you of 10 February summarises the proposed changes to the original plans in just four bullet points. These revisions merely tinker at the edges of the Parish Council's objections to the proposal in relation to design issues and to the detrimental impact of the proposal upon the Conservation Area. In no way do they address the main concerns raised. We refer you once again to our letter of objection dated 5 December 2016 in which these objections are set out in detail.

'In conclusion, Savills' marketing approach and Derek Warwick Developments' actions have consistently been geared towards the constructing of a case for Change of Use to residential use of the site, regardless. The chronology of events and the actions taken by Savills and by the developer from January 2016 through to October 2016 make this abundantly clear. It is the Parish Council's firm belief that the failure to make any credible effort to sustain the

future of the Queens as a public house wholly undermines the developer's case for change of use to residential use.'

RESOLVED: That Cllr Mrs Palmer's letter of objection forms the basis of Selborne Parish Council's objection to the application.

17/051 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 15 March 2017 at Oakhanger Village Hall, Oakhanger, Bordon, GU35 9JU, commencing at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 5.25pm.