

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GREAT WOLFORD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2018 IN WOLFORD VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs. Lynn Mathias in the chair and Councillors Mrs. Jennifer Green, Mr. Paul Riley and Mrs. Lynn Bryan plus the Clerk Mrs. Janet Piller. Also present was County Councillor Mrs. Jo Barker. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mr. Steve Duck and also District Councillor Mr. Stephen Gray. There were 49 members of the public present.

In view of the strength of public interest, the meeting was called specifically to consider the following two linked planning applications:

- (a) Fox and Hounds Inn: change of use of listed former Public House (A4) to two dwellings (C3) with associated internal alterations (reference number: 18/01396/FUL)
- (b) Fox and Hounds Inn: change of use of listed former Public House (A4) to two dwellings (C3) with associated internal alterations (reference number: 18/01397/LBC) (Specific Listed Building application)

The Chairman welcomed all present. She outlined the background to the two planning applications and it was reported that the applicant and her partner had been notified of the meeting with the comment that they would be invited to speak, if they wished, about their proposals. It was noted they were not present.

The Chairman stated that a draft letter (held on file) from the Parish Council to SDC Planning Department detailing objections to the proposals had been prepared. This would be fully considered by the meeting following, first, a brief statement from each Parish Councillor and then, secondly, an open discussion of the proposals by all present. Accordingly, each Parish Councillor summarised their objections to the proposals and it was then proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Riley and agreed unanimously that the Parish Council should object to the proposals to SDC in the strongest terms.

Before proceeding to the general discussion part of the proceedings, the Chairman accepted a request from a local chef and restaurant/pub proprietor, who at this stage asked not to be named on the record, to address the meeting. He spoke of his own experience in turning around establishments which had been virtually derelict and of his dedication to preserving the traditions of hospitality in historic public houses. He stated his firm view that, contrary to the opinions given in the planning application, the Fox and Hounds could be returned to profitability and to its former status as a destination pub/restaurant and a thriving local community hub. He also stated that such a revival could be achieved with the added advantage of supporting local suppliers, providing jobs and working alongside other local businesses, e.g. bed and breakfast establishments. He expressed his serious interest in the project and reported that his land agent had already approached the pub's owners. He was warmly thanked for his contribution to the proceedings.

Copies of the draft letter to SDC were circulated to all present and the Chairman introduced each section of the paper for comments and opinions from the floor. A vote of thanks was unanimously agreed to Councillor Green for preparing such a comprehensive and detailed document laying out the case for the proposals to be rejected.

The overall content of the draft document was agreed and the additional points raised from the floor were:

1. Two separate but linked applications were being considered and separate responses would need to be made to each.
2. Include, where relevant, selected quotes from minutes of Parish Council meetings to demonstrate on-going concerns about the pub management since soon after the current owners' arrival.
3. Emphasis on initial support for current owners, e.g. offer of free publicity in the Link magazine which was ignored.
4. Check on precise dates, e.g. when the pub closed and when the pub sign was taken down.
5. Add that County Councillor Jo Barker's readiness to mediate was ignored when an offer was made to buy the pub.

6. Include point that unnamed expert (see above) had confirmed the viability of the pub and his interest in it.
7. Include benefits that a successful pub would bring to local food suppliers, bed and breakfast businesses, local employment, work experience for young people, etc.
8. Emphasize how little effort was made by present owners to make a success of the pub and how quickly they closed down.
9. Add reference to special case of pubs in Conservation Areas, e.g. Swan and Edgar pub in London (ref. Protect Pubs website).

The Chairman thanked those present for their input and stated that a final document would now be prepared and sent. She also recommended that individuals' letters of objection be sent as soon as possible to SDC Planning Dept (fao Planning Officer Mr. Joe Brooke). It was noted that the Save the Fox and Hounds Inn campaign was sending a separate letter of objection. It was further noted that the precise timing of the two applications' progress through the planning system was unknown at present and further details would be available in due course.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.