

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my frustration, as a business owner, that a recommendation for refusal has been issued despite some fundamental 'due diligence' not having been carried out, nor any consultation with ourselves despite numerous offers.

I quote the report from the planning officer. "This recommendation is made following careful consideration of all the issues raised through the application process and **thorough discussion with the applicants**".

We haven't had a single response from our offer to reach out to discuss any detail of the application, nor our offer to address any specific concerns of the application.

16 June - emailed request to hold a discussion regarding what we believed to be inaccurate comments from the conservation officer.

No response

21 June - Phoned to chase a response from email

No response

28 June - second email requesting a discussion, and to clarify the requirement for committee (we stated on our application that I was running for borough council, but there had been no acknowledgement of such)

No response on discussion. Acknowledgement of requiring committee only.

To our understanding neither the planning officer nor the conservation officer have visited the site, not only to understand our business, but also to see the proportions have been purposely designed to ensure the view is maintained, our neighbours outlook is improved (hence not a single objection), and that the glazing only allows site of the attractive pizza oven (a key marketing aspect our of proposal is that the business showcases visually the craft nature of our offer in an attractive, premium way) , (none of the current workings of the kitchen or future kitchen will be on show, this will be hidden by the current exterior wall of the current extension).

Numerous comments by the conservation office show a lack of awareness of the site and our business, namely the suggestion of siting an oven in a different location to the current kitchen, and that replacing four 1100ltr bins with a small 2.7m extension would create "an obvious risk of a spill over of pub- goers, noise, litter and other associated factors into the wider public realm".

Then we have the environmental response, which makes no reference to our amendments to remove the 'wood burning' element and to have the extraction 100% routed internally and to extract from the current chimney located on the two story extension. It simply makes the reports recommendation for refusal inaccurate / out of date, and I reference the updated solution.

The challenges of running a hospitality business in the current economic climate needs no introduction. With that backdrop, and I'll articulate the scale of the challenge shortly, I feel that at the very least those determining such an important requirement for our business's future can take the time to visit, understand and with us, the business, discuss the proposal.

Two main issues are a current theme on the planning report:

The first:

That somehow the paper mill inn by its proximity to the grade two listed old hall inn, is subject to the same scrutiny. We apply the very highest standards to ourselves, and welcome the councils requirement for tasteful development, however the old hall itself was granted a much larger kitchen extension a number of years ago, that showed a pragmatic approach to ensuring the business could evolve to meet modern requirements. This was done despite the location being at the front elevation of a listed building, and has been a huge success that hasn't detracted from the character of the conservation area. The conservation of the old hall, Whitehough Hall & the paper mill are all a direct result of the success of these two previously bankrupted businesses.

Over £1.5m has been spent in my tenure on capital improvements to these beautiful properties, but conservation requires capital, and for that to be maintained the viability of these businesses needs to be maintained also. Even if you believed our proposal to be a small compromise to conservation, which I believe it not to be, it would be one worth making to ensure that the future success of the business can be maintained and with that the continued investment in this hamlet.

The second:

I quote from the case officer "There is no evidence to suggest that the business is failing and that the extension is essential for the ongoing success of the business." This has been my all consuming challenge for the last couple of years. A previous application at the old hall was submitted to diversify the land to the rear of the old hall, to try to provide revenue to off set the plummeting margins. This was refused, but the committee instructed the planning office to address their concerns and have a discussion with ourselves to adapt it to find a workable solution. Something we have temporally given up on due to lack of response from all our requests to enact the committees recommendations from the the planning office. The same need to address the dire situation we find ourselves, as busy as we are, has become very urgent. To give you some context, I quantify the cost challenges these two Inn's have faced in the last 12months.

Energy increase: +£150,000

Wage increase +£126,000

Food inflation circa 20%

Drinks inflation circa 15%

Maintenance & property costs +£50,000

This is enormous, unsustainable and although our proposal doesn't come close to countering these challenges, it makes a huge impact on the electricity consumption from the kitchens, it allows significantly improved efficiency in service delivery and it ensures that we are able to maintain our highly skilled and motivated team by offering the facilities that ensures there professional development and allow us to offer products that our customers demand.

Quoted from the Independent Newspaper

Over 150 pubs in England and Wales have shut down in the first three months of 2023, new figures have revealed. At least 51 pubs are closing down per month- a significant jump from 32 lost pubs a month during the whole of 2022.

Last year, 386 pubs were lost for good.

Unaffordable energy bills have given the industry a battering as the rate of pubs being demolished or redeveloped for other purposes has increased by almost 60 per cent at the start of the year, according to analysis of official government data by commercial real estate intelligence firm Altus Group.

The make up of trade has significantly changed since covid with many previously regular pub goers changing their habits, making it more imperative than ever we adapt. The list of converted pubs in our area alone is huge, the British pub is something that is precious and needs protecting.

I quote again from the report "the Case Officer has sought solutions where possible to secure a development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area". I refute this assertion, and my strongly worded objections to how this case has been presented to the committee reflects the strong feeling I hold on how this hasn't been given due attention, and not nearly enough consideration has been given to the challenges I and our industry faces. I need solutions and I need them in a timely manner. It is absolutely not a given that simply being busy ensures that a business remains viable when the margins are under such incredible pressure.

I duly request a pragmatic approach when reviewing this application and I hope that I've been able to provide some better context to the comments so far made.

Best wishes.

Dan Capper

Owner / manager of the old hall inn and paper mill inn.