

Offton and Willisham Parish Council

Minutes of the Offton & Willisham Planning Committee meeting held remotely on 6th January 2021
7pm

Present: Cllr S Warnes (Chair) Cllr A Cox
Cllr A Bye Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh
Dst Cllr D Pratt
Clerk T Davis 1 member of the public

ACTION

1	<p><u>Meeting Administration</u></p> <p>a) Welcome by Chair and opening of the meeting; The Chair opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.</p> <p>b) Apologies for absence; Apologies were accepted from Cty Cllr K Oakes</p> <p>c) Declarations of Interest; None</p>	
2	<p>BMSDC Planning Consultation requested</p> <p>a) DC/20/05676 - Single Storey outbuilding to 1 dwelling - Offton After discussion, which highlighted that the application was a good use of a now obsolete building, it was Proposed by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh, Seconded by Cllr A Bye and Unanimously agreed to be in favour of this application.</p>	Clerk
3	<p>BMSDC Planning Public Consultations</p> <p>a) DC/20/05376 - Change of Use from Public house to 1 dwelling</p> <p>b) DC/20/05377 -Listed Building Consent for alterations from Public House to 1 dwelling - Gt Bricett</p> <p>Items a & b on the agenda were taken together and discussed as a whole.</p> <p>The Chair invited the resident to speak. The resident had prepared a speech and it is contained in the addendum below.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the resident and a discussion took place in respect of the views of the Council. Each Councillor in turn spoke about different issues, from the outrage of frequent users of the restaurant, the historic significance, the existing tenants, the employment opportunities, the importance of keeping the economic use of the building, market forces in the hospitality industry and the viability, the current covid-19 not being long term, an Asset of Community Value application, and the overall future of the site in line with local needs.</p> <p>The Chair also asked Cllr D Pratt if the views of Great Bricett Parish Council were known. It was confirmed that Gt Bricett objected and was in the process of waiting for their application for an Asset of Community Value to be accepted by BMSDC.</p> <p>Further discussion took place, raising more questions about the validity of the viability study figures, the significance of the historic sight, and losing a long term employment and hospitality site.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh, Seconded by Cllr S Warnes and unanimously agreed for the clerk to write a formal objection citing national and local policy supporting the objection on the basis of:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Needing to keep an employment site in this rural area 2. Retaining an existing business in a village facility of historic significance 	

	3. Supporting the neighbouring parish of Gt Bricett	Clerk
	Meeting Closed at 7:42pm	

Addendum

Thank you to the Chair for allowing me to say a few words in relation to the proposed plans for the Red Lion pub and restaurant at Great Bricett which abuts or is close to the villages of Offton, Willisham and Ringshall.

These are my personal opinions and they do not represent those of any other private or public body, although of course they might share similar views.

Some of you would have heard about and read my comments in relation to these two planning application as put forward to Great Bricett Parish Council at its Extraordinary meeting on 17th December 2020.

This renowned 17th Century pub building has been a hostelry for at least 150 years. It is the only remaining public house/licensed premises in Great Bricett parish and there are none in nearby, Ringshall or Willisham. Therefore this should be regarded as an essential Asset of Community Value. It has remained open for business through two world wars, two pandemics and countless recessions, depressions, downturns and changes of ownership and recently has new management. It enjoys a wide diversity of clientele from all over the region.

Among its accolades it has a 5-star rating on TripAdvisor and has been named as one of the top ten most friendly vegetarian pubs in the country under whatpub.com. It also offers vegan food too and is run by an enthusiastic team of professionals under a tenancy agreement.

I would like to add that as far as I am aware the owners Midland-based Community pub company called Hawthorn and the applicants – agents Everose Ltd – have not listed this designated public house business premises for sale before threatening closure.

Also to my knowledge no viability assessments have been submitted to verify the surprising claims made in the East Anglian Daily Times' online website, dated 12th December 2020, by the agents acting for the owners, of its viability which are challenged.

I believe this is an opportunistic attempt, under the cloak of the Covid-19 to strip us of yet another community asset which has become all too familiar during this pandemic.

Under the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) adopted by Mid Suffolk and Babergh district councils entitled the “Retention of Shops, Post Offices and Public Houses in Villages” (February 2004) the local authorities and its officers are duty-bound to acknowledge the valuable contribution that these facilities offer acting as a focus for community life and employment potential.

Among the three objectives that the planning guidance stipulates are that any plan should enable the reopening of a service or facility at a future stage by resisting specific building alteration that would prevent reopening. Hence my objection to the second of the planning application for Listed Building Consent to make internal alterations.

I quote from the SPG document under 2.2 and 2.3 of the policy directives that: “The role of the Local Planning Authority is to support these initiatives resisting changes of use from general stores, post offices and pubs”. It also states to “Enable the reopening of a service or facility at a future stage by resisting specific building alterations that would prevent reopening.” Hence my objection to the first planning application for Change of Use from a pub to a residential dwelling.

During this time of pandemic when no long-term disruptive community planning and infrastructure decisions should be made, I urge the parish council Planning Committee to recommend turning down both these planning applications.

I just have one of those gut feelings that this is being rushed through by the planning applicants with minimal notice, under the cloak of Covid-19, right up against Christmas and the New Year, and there has been no opportunity for community consultation. Local residents were oblivious to these planning proposals and are unable to currently enjoy free public association due to Covid-19 rules and Lockdown.