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|                        | <p><b>Online Comments</b></p>   |
| <p>Application No:</p> | <p>18/04678/FUL</p>   |
| <p>Comments:</p>       | <p>OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE OF THE THREE HORSESHOES INN TO A SINGLE RESIDENTIAL DWELLING (Ref:18/04678/FUL)</p> <p>The applicant recognises that both national and local planning policy seek to retain public houses as community assets and asks for planning permission for change of use on the grounds that the pub is no longer a financially viable prospect. The applicant's support for this is set out in the Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) and Public House Viability Report (PHVR) that were submitted with the application.</p> <p>The arguments as to why the Three Horseshoes is no longer viable as a pub is fundamentally flawed and both documents contain significant factual errors.</p> <p>Addressing specific points made in the two documents:</p> <p>Trade at the pub has declined in recent years ... and Wadworth ... agreed a rent reduction ... However, this reduced rent could not be sustained and despite efforts to boost the trade at the pub, the landlord ceased trading in September 2017. The building has been vacant since then. Following the closure of the pub, the site was sold to the applicant (PDAS 5.6)</p> <p>This is a complete fabrication of what actually happened.</p> <p>First, the pub did not close until late January 2018. It was then sold six weeks later to the applicant. Second, the tenant had entered a new three-year tenancy agreement in June 2017. They left to move to another Wadworth tenanted pub, which they saw as offering a better opportunity to them.</p> <p>This paragraph, which is key to the applicant's case, is completely undermined by a letter from Chris Welham, CEO of Wadworth, dated 13 February 2018. This says:</p> <p>"We are selling the property as a pub and we have an interested party as such to purchase it as a pub. I am truly sorry that the pub has closed in the interim period. This was never our intention as we fully hoped that it could have continued to trade up and until the point when the sale completes. We are trying to appoint a temporary operator ... but it is proving difficult ..."</p> <p>"I am also very hopeful that you will be able to continue to enjoy Wadwoth beer once the sale has gone through ..."</p> <p>That many people in Burbage wanted to see the pub re-open and that there would be stiff opposition to any other outcome was conveyed to the CEO of Wadworth, who undertook in a letter dated 27 February 2018 to make the purchaser aware of this.</p> <p>There is one other pub in the village (PDAS 5.7)</p> <p>What is not stated is that the White Hart does not open lunchtimes and does not sell food. In a village the size of Burbage, these present substantial opportunities to the Three Horseshoes if it is properly run by the right people.</p> |

In recent years there have been several managers, with each one seeking to invigorate custom (PHVR para 4.1).

This is not true.

The penultimate tenant (tenant 1) ran the pub for over 20 years, until June 2014. It was then taken over by new a tenant (tenant 2), who left in late January 2018 to move to another Wadworth tenanted pub.

Tenant 1 held a number of events, perhaps once every two to three month, which were generally well supported. However, towards the end of their tenancy, these declined in frequency, as they moved towards retirement and because their partner was seriously ill. Tenant 2 held a few events in the first year of their tenancy, but these became much less frequent thereafter and much less well supported. For example, never once did they seek to make New Year's Eve an event and what had been other successful events were dropped and not replaced.

Barrelage figures show the decline of the pub and support the case for change of use (PHVR 4.1)

This is used as the most significant part of the case for showing the pub is uneconomic. However, although the decline of sales is fact, no mention is made of the likely causes of this, which were obvious to both existing and potential customers of the pub.

The figures given, from October 2013/14, cover the period when it was occupied by tenant 2, who took over in June 2014. Under their tenancy, both existing and potential customers decided to take their custom elsewhere. This reflected the ambience of the pub, which by this time was suffering because of the lack of investment in it and continued to deteriorate, customers' disquiet with the tenants and the lack of promotion of the pub, which declined over time.

The PHVR also makes no mention of the fact that tenant 1 was able to earn enough from the pub to fund their retirement and purchase a residential property.

Declining wet sales led Wadworths to conclude that it was not justifiable to invest to increase food sales (PHVR 4.1)

In obtaining planning permission for an extension in 2014, Wadworth clearly thought there was an opportunity if the right people ran the pub. This was stated in the advert for new tenants when tenant 1 decided to retire. Just because tenant 2 was not the right person for this (they openly admitted not having the kind of catering skills required, their previous experience having been in running a cafe), this is not to say that the pub could not have a successful wet and food business with the right landlord.

Prior to closure, the last tenant struggled to survive (PHVR 4.1)

Although tenant 2 was not making a lot of money, this is not born out by they having taken out a new three-year tenancy agreement around six months prior to moving to another Wadworth pub. They themselves said that another 10 regulars would make all the difference.

## IN SUMMARY, THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE PHVR ARE NOT VALID

The Three Horseshoes is heavily dependent on the local catchment area for its trade and its location does not benefit from any passing trade (6.1)

Although the first part of this statement may be true, it reflects the 'Shoes not being a 'destination' pub for food, many pubs in the surrounding area successfully doing this.

If you examine other villages in Wiltshire, as a 'rule of thumb' it can be seen that each 1,000 residents supports one pub. For Burbage, which with the recent development now has nearly 2,000 residents, this would suggest that the village could support two well-run pubs.

The second part of the statement is not true. Numerous potential customers, many seeking a place to eat, come off the village by-pass, which is a major holiday/trunk route (the landlord of the White Hart has corroborated this).

The sale of the public house for residential development was the only option available to Wadworth (6.2)

A letter from the CEO of Wadworth dated 13 February 2018 shows that this is not true. In this, the CEO said that "We are selling the property as a pub and we have an interested party as such to purchase it as a pub".

There is intense competition from better-located local pubs (6.3)

The Three Horseshoes is in an idyllic location, overlooking the village green.

If the pub developed its food business, it has an untapped large village as its catchment that has nowhere else that serves food. To go somewhere else requires someone to drive, or the use of public transport (non-existent) or taxis (expensive).

It is also close to other villages and Marlborough, and within half a mile of a major holiday/trunk route.

Despite Wadworth significantly discounting the rent chargeable ... there has been insufficient impact ... in order to maintain a business on the site (6.4)

Wadworth sold the business because it did not see it as fitting its business strategy, which is to focus on larger managed pubs and to divest smaller tenanted pubs (letter from CEO and Annual Report 2017). It did not sell it because it was unviable.

For all the above reasons, the Three Horseshoes is an unviable business (6.5)

It is correct to say that market conditions are unlikely to change to the pub's advantage. However, there are a number of 'self help' initiatives that, with the right landlords, could change its fortunes, including:

- Invest in the pub, starting with better heating and renovating the ladies/gents – the CEO of Wadworth acknowledged in his letter of 13 February 2018 that "we have not historically invested in the pub for many years".
- Develop the food business so that the pub became a 'destination' place to go. This would be attractive to residents of the village, people from the surrounding area and passers-by. As this developed, this would support an extension.
- Develop a lunchtime trade centred on making the pub attractive to older residents of the village.

Also ignored is the fact that the owner of the White Hart has shown that the fortune of a pub

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|               | <p>can be turned round, regardless of market conditions.</p> <p>THEREFORE, THE PLANNING APPLICATION HAS NO MERIT AND SHOULD BE REJECTED.</p> |
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| Date:         | 18 June 2018   |
| Case Officer: | Jonathan James   |