

## Laverstoke and Freefolk PC Watership Down Inn Meeting Minutes 24th March 2015

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- **Apologies for Absence:** Nixie Graham, Jim Marsh, Richard Waters  
**In attendance:** Bob Hough, Clare Albert, Charlie Seligman
- Planning Ref: 15/00508/FUL Watership Down Inn: Erection of detached building in garden area to provide 5 guest rooms for use ancillary to the adjoining public house following demolition of existing outbuildings.
- **Public Time**

Philip Denee explained his rationale for the planned guest room building. He referred to his considerable investment since taking over the pub from Punch Taverns a couple of years ago. With large numbers of pubs going out of business every year he explained the importance of underpinning it with this application for a further 5 bedrooms, adding to the 3 in the main pub building.
- He then outlined the design, which is based loosely on accommodation that he had stayed in that had been attractive. The design incorporates ground floor sitting rooms with en-suite bathrooms and mezzanine bedrooms. Consideration was given to building on other parts of the garden but he was asked to keep the sycamores at the end of the garden. He said the 19m long oak clad building with clay pantile roof would be lower than the anticipated 6m by 0.5-0.7m. The store on the end of the building would add 2m to the length. Existing derelict stables would be demolished.
- Philip explained he does not want the character of the pub to change. He doesn't want to create a conference centre but does want to take up on demand from business and tourist sector. Although they don't expect to run conferences they may be able to support occasional business meetings. The pub sources the majority of its food locally e.g. from butchers and greengrocers in Overton and the beer is brewed within 30 miles. The extra build would add 1 or possibly 2 more employees. He believes the build would be supported within the National Planning Framework guidelines which support rural businesses.
- A resident, who expressed that it was positive that the pub be rejuvenated, owns 2 car parking spaces opposite the pub car park and is very concerned about car parking space, especially in the summer, and also about his access. Already they have been blocked in half a dozen times within 2 years. Concerns were raised about the increased traffic dangers of the junction with B3400 and road visibility especially for strangers. Comments were also made about the visibility of the building from further afield due to its size.
- Another resident expressed their gratitude that the pub had been rescued and wanted to see it as a viable business but had a number of criticisms. They felt strongly that the pub's own planning communication had been poor. Their main concerns were that the ridge was to be only 1.5m from the next door neighbour's boundary and was to run almost the entire length of the garden with a resulting loss of light and unpleasant view. In addition they were worried about lighting and toilet extract venting to the neighbouring side. It

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was suggested that in order for the accommodation to be successful, staff would need to be based on site and therefore further accommodation might be needed for them. Philip Denee confirmed this was not the plan and it was expected staff would be housed in Whitchurch. The resident was also worried about these being long term let or being subject to a future change of use. Additionally it was felt that the pub garden that had been a big attraction in the past would be negatively impacted. Increased footfall was expected to have an effect on car parking and overspill onto the road was raised again as an issue.

- Another resident commented on the fact that they cannot open their windows at night because of the pub noise. They also referenced a 1980s planning application for a motel that was turned down and then again, after appeal. They also were critical of the current business model with part time opening hours (12-3pm and from 6pm) and suggested that if the pub opened longer to sell coffee that would help. Also the lack of turning space in Priory Lane was highlighted
- Public time concluded with discussion on current car park capacity which is around 20/ 22 with 4 in the road. It is anticipated that an additional 5 car park spots would be needed given full occupancy. Currently there is only 50% occupancy without any real marketing effort. With the additional rooms the pub would have critical mass to employ a cleaner. Hardy's help out with additional parking on special occasions.

The PC then discussed the application and considered the comments made by the residents who attended public time. The council concluded it would not object outright but would instead seek to have certain amendments made and impose conditions as follows:

- The height of the development be limited to a single storey
- All venting to be to the Western elevation
- That there be a S106 agreement tying the building to the pub and that long term occupation be disallowed.
- There is a requirement for more parking spaces

Date of next Full PC meeting: 14th April 2015 at 7.30pm at Lady Rose Hall

Sign.....Date.....