

Sibford Gower Parish Council

Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held in Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School on Monday, 30th October 2017

Present

Parish Cllrs Peter Abbott, Susan Bannister, Oswyn Murray (Chairman), & Gilian Soden.
16 local residents and the Clerk (Peter Hardman).

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Alan Parkin

Planning Applications considered

No. 17/01981/F

G R Noquet

The Pheasant Pluckers Inn, Street through Burdrop, Burdrop
OX15 5RQ.

Change of use from A4 to C3

**Not approved –please see the Parish Council’s response, given in the appendix, to
Cherwell District Council.**

Two local residents, present at the Meeting, spoke regarding their objections to the planning application.

Nos. 17/02068/F & 17/02069/F

Mr & Mrs R Mallows

Yew Tree House, Main Street, Sibford Gower OX15 5RT

Minor revision to previous planning and listed building approval, window installed instead of approved rear door and the boiler flue installed through renovated stone wall (Retrospective)

No comment

No. 17/02102/F

Mr & Mrs R Tustian

Chilaway Farm, Sibford Road, Epwell OX15 6LL

Removal of condition 10 (dwelling occupancy) of 17/01619/F

No comment

The Chairman thanked all at the Meeting for attending and he then closed the Meeting at 8.55pm.

Appendix

Planning Application 17/01981/F: Response by Sibford Gower Parish Council

This application was briefly discussed at a Parish Council meeting on 9th October 2017, on the basis of which a preliminary response was drafted and discussed at a Planning Subcommittee on 30th October. At the latter meeting there were present four councillors, the Clerk and sixteen local inhabitants, including the applicants.

Parishioners were given the opportunity to speak, and two did so; the chairman also asked questions of the applicants for clarification and invited them to reply. As a result we make this response.

To Page 2

Sibford Gower Parish Council wishes once again to object to the application for change of use on the Pheasant Pluckers Inn (late Bishop Blaize) from A4 to C3 residential use, for the following reasons:

There have been nine refusals of previous applications for change of use on this property since 2006; two have gone to appeal (2013 and 2014) and have been rejected each time by the Inspectors. In addition the owners were on 29th Sept 2014 convicted in court of failure to comply with a valid order to cease to use the property for solely residential purposes. They continue to defy this court order.

The property has been subject to an ACV designation since Feb 2016, which precludes change of use. In order to challenge this, the owners put forward two arguments:

1. The property is unsaleable as a public house.

Response: The record of their recent attempts to market the property is curious. In May 2017 they provided evidence in the form of an email from their agent Sidney Phillips that during the twenty months it was on sale from October 2015 to May 2017 there had indeed been one inquiry, but not a single request to view (Complaint of Councillor Misconduct: 11 May 2017 by Mrs Noquet against Councillor Murray). In the last four months by contrast they appear to claim that there were 32 viewings and four offers. They should be asked to explain this strange disparity.

In 2012-3 the value of the property was established in two public inquiries, and agreed by professional valuers representing both sides to be between £240/275,000 (for the Council) and £262,000 (for the appellants: APP/C3105/A/13/2190714). The four offers received by the Noquets in the last months confirm these valuations: all offers were £300,000 or less.

It is therefore clear that the asking price of £395,000 overvalues the property by at least £100,000. It has not been accepted by the open market, and we question whether it was ever so intended. The claim that their agents have supported this price, if true, suggests that they are out of touch with the local market.

It was for this reason that the community of the Sibfords did not think it worth proceeding to mount an offer to purchase under the ACV procedure, until the owners indicated that they were willing to accept a realistic market price.

We also draw attention to the recent experience of a very similar property, the Chandlers Arms in Epwell. This was purchased in Sept 2013 in a run-down state for £215,000. It was completely refurbished for approximately £190,000, and was sold in 2016 as a going concern with considerable goodwill for £395,000. In the meantime

Page 3

the dynamic owners had achieved a weekly turnover of £7,000 and in 2016 an annual certified turnover of £366,718, with an annual profit of £72,534.

This example demonstrates that the Pheasant Pluckers would be currently viable, and might indeed achieve a sale price close to their desired figure, if the owners were minded to run it as a public house. But the pub is closed and (according to their agents) no longer on the market. The owners seek the same price as the Chandlers Arms for a property without certified accounts, no longer trading, without goodwill and requiring considerable renovation to make it operational. This is clearly an unrealistic offer for sale.

The applicants were invited to comment on the fact that they had provided no documentary evidence of the price that their agents had suggested for the property, and had refused to respond to the request of Cherwell District Council for supporting evidence of viability studies, detailed financial records, valuations, viewings and marketing exercises (Mr Neville's email of 9/10/17). They simply repeated that any such evidence was available privately to individuals under strict conditions. In our opinion this amounts to a refusal to make a full disclosure of all evidence in support of their application. This means that there is no possibility of assessing the validity of their statements, and that therefore the application should fail.

2 .Public Meeting 20th June 2016:

The public meeting called by the chairmen of Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris Parish Councils was intended to gauge the extent of support for the ACV, and to discuss various ancillary activities that might be run alongside a reopened pub in order to assess their usefulness in relation to existing village operations. The description offered by the applicants completely misrepresents the discussions that took place. These ended with a unanimous endorsement by approximately 100 residents of continuing to press for the reopening of the public house as an Asset of Community Value, and the formation of a group of volunteers to take this matter forward if and when a realistic opportunity for purchase arose. We also rather naively hoped that the owners might take up some of these ideas, if they genuinely wished to reopen the pub.

In one respect the comments of Mrs Noquet appear to be correct (5.5). She states that she was approached after the meeting by a man with a proposal of accommodation between the parties involved. In fact in early May 2016 the Chairman of Sibford Gower had indeed been approached by an occasional resident in the village with such a proposal. The chairman formed the opinion that proposal seemed both illegal and immoral, and anyway lay outside the powers of the Parish Council: he therefore declined to present it to the PC or permit it to be discussed at the forthcoming meeting. The approach to Mrs Noquet, while it may well have happened, is therefore a personal initiative (as the individual seems to have stated to Mrs Noquet), not supported by anyone else in the community.