

Grindleton Parish Council objection to planning application

3/2020/0219

Grindleton Parish Council strongly objects to the above planning application on several grounds as detailed below.

RVBC core strategy EC2 states: Proposals that have an adverse impact on existing community facilities would only be permitted as an exception where the proposed development would bring defined and demonstrable benefits (what benefit would the loss of a pub bring?)

National Planning Policy Framework – local planning policies and decisions in rural areas should enable the retention and development of community facilities such as pubs.

As you know the public house is a vital part of rural life and acts as a drop-in centre for a catch up and chat with friends etc.

RVBC are aware that when facilities like this disappear, we then have more social problems in terms of loneliness and depression. The village has been vibrant, with plenty of social activity. The closure of the Duke of York Public House has had a direct impact on the above over the last few years.

The Parish council carried out its 5-year plan consultation in Q3/4 of 2018 and we had overwhelming consensus from the villagers that a public house is vital to keeping the village alive.

The current owner has allowed the building to deteriorate since the building has been in his possession by his own admission in his application. As a developer/ builder he could have stopped the water ingress and any other deterioration but chose not to, which questions his motives.

The RBVC official who assessed the building recently reported no significant deterioration. This is difficult to comprehend based on the owner's admission as above. What sort of assessment was undertaken, did they enter the roof space and did they use a damp meter?

The Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. (GCPL) has funds available to repair the building and bring it back into beneficial use.

In this instance the similar proposal to the Eagle and Child quoted in the application is not valid. In that case no purchaser came forward. Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has made a reasonable offer and is willing to bring it back to beneficial use. GCPL has obtained a professional assessment that shows the building is a viable business as a pub, café community hub and shop. They are happy to take the business on.

EC1 states: Proposals that result in the loss of existing employment sites to other forms of development will need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact upon the local economy.

The pub used to employ numerous local people to run the pub from cleaners to cooks, bar staff and teenage part time jobs. It provided first work experiences for young people from the village in a safe local environment; all important in rural communities.

EC2 states: Proposals that have an adverse impact on existing community facilities would only be permitted as an exception where the proposed development would bring defined and demonstrable benefits.

The pub is a place where people can meet, talk, interact socially in games i.e. darts, pool etc.; all essential activities in a small community. The loss of these facilities could result in social isolation and potential mental health issues. This should not be underestimated.

DMB1: 5. Any attempts that have been made to secure an alternative employment generating use for the site, must be supported by evidence such as property agents details, including periods of marketing and response that the Property/Business has been marketed for Business use for a minimum period of six months, or information that demonstrates to the Council's satisfaction, that the current use is not viable for employment purposes.

GCPL has obtained a professional assessment that shows the building is a viable business as a pub.

There is no proof or demonstration of the public house not being viable. It was purposefully 'run down' by Punch Taverns, who used tenants that did not put money into the business and at no time let the pub to a reputable tenant who knew how to make it a success. The building was run by "tenants who were providing a caretaker role". This is not a business plan nor is it an attempt to run a viable business.

Previously to this, others have managed good businesses as shown by the business rates applied by RVBC. They were forced out by exorbitant rents applied by Punch Taverns. This situation will not arise if GCPL were to own it, as its prospectus outlines a fair rent scheme to encourage a sustainable business. Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has made a good offer and is willing to create another viable business. That business would also be in a substantially better position than previous occupants due to both the fair rent scheme and the recent abolition of business rates for pubs with a rateable value below £51,000.

The loss of the Duke of York HAS been a considerable loss to the community and could become an even greater benefit than before by being allowed to be a Community Pub/Café/hub. No community owned pub has closed since opening anywhere in England.

It is a fact that no Community pub has closed of over 100 opened so far. As the owner is NOT selling both pubs the Buck is irrelevant to the considerations. The application made is not about the viability of two public houses but the loss of the Duke of York as a public house. However, it has been reported that, in the past, both The Buck and Duke of York mutually benefited each other. It was common for people to visit both in an evening out and on New Year's Eve. It has been a village tradition for both pubs' clientele to join together with other villagers in the road junction between them to celebrate the New Year.

Prospective buyers have not been put off by the Grade 2 listing as Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has made repeated offers to purchase the building. What evidence is there that this is the reason prospective buyers were put off? Were the reasons buyers are put off because it is marketed at £325,000 but the owner is stating that he wants £400,00 minimum When we spoke to the selling agent, they sounded frustrated by this tactic being employed by the owner.

The question around these valuations is; was it valued as a pub or residential building? Could it be that the owner's valuation is as a development site? The two valuers used by the owner do not appear to be experts in licenced property valuations.

Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has had the building professionally valued which suggested less than the current owner paid.

Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has made an offer in excess of what the current owner paid. The owner claims that the building is deteriorating so why would the value be increasing? The current owner has marketed the property at a level that it is unrealistic. He continues to insist on an unrealistic price and has at no time entered into real negotiations to sell the property.

When the last planning approval was refused it was based on the fact the property had not been properly marketed. In this case the Parish Council feel nothing has changed. We re-iterate - marketed at £325,00 but asking £400,000, we know it was professionally valued at £225,000. We question what does properly marketed mean? We feel that 'properly marketing' is asking a close to valuation price and a realistic attempt is made to sell as a pub.

We would like to correct an inaccuracy as the owner did not make the contact with Grindleton Parish Council and has never contacted the Parish Council. The "so called" meeting did not result in the formation of Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. GCPL is an independent group of people willing to invest their own money to save the village's historic building and village amenity. The Parish Council and Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. are separate groups. At no time has the Parish Council been in talks with the owner.

The loss of The Duke of York HAS seriously harmed the social facilities of the village. Its revival and further enhancement as a pub/café/hub would be of great benefit to the village by having a positive effect on social isolation. It would also enhance tourism in the Ribble Valley by encouraging the wider community, cyclists, and walkers on the Ribble Way and elsewhere in the Parish, which has more footpaths than any other in Lancashire and as such attracts walkers from near and far.

It is clear in this application that the owner is suggesting that if others in the village i.e. the Buck Inn and the Pavilion alter the way they do things, this would make up for the loss of the Duke of York. This is very presumptive and highly speculative.

Paragraph 6.15 is all supposition and no fact

"The Pavilion remains and could open a public bar" is a very strange statement. How can the applicant tell people what to do to deflect attention away from his problems? The Pavilion will never be a pub. It is run by volunteers and offers activities and functions the pubs don't, hence why pubs are important as they offer facilities other organisations can't and help the wider community by giving a broad choice of amenities. We have villagers who used to go to the pub on a regular basis but never been to the pavilion since the pub closed.

The Pavilion did NOT inevitably take some focus of village life away from the village pubs, for example, on bonfire night/ New Year's public holidays/ televised football, it was agreed

not to open the bar and to encourage the crowds to visit the pub. The bar did not stay open after events or later, to try to send trade in the direction of the pub. The Pavilion has a very limited kitchen facility and is a function hall run by volunteers. It still has a policy not to compete with any village pub. It is NOT a pub and never will be!

These plans are pertinent to the Duke of York only and not the saviour of the Buck Inn. As and when the Buck Inn submits any plans both the Parish and RVBC will deal with that accordingly. It is irrelevant at this moment. An argument could be made if you use the statement above that it would be better to save an historic building and return it to its main purpose a pub. Then this will help the sellers of the Buck inn. As a Council we must deal with the application presented and not second guess what others will do.

The owner has stated previously that he is expecting to achieve a price in line with a development site not a pub business. As in 6.11 did his valuers consider the building as a development site or a pub?

We have evidence that a reasonable offer, above a valuation made by an expert licenced premises valuer, has been made. Therefore, it has NOT been established that the property is no longer viable as a public house.

As the application is for change of use only, it is reasonable to assume that further applications for alteration will follow as the building as it stands is not suitable as a domestic dwelling. Therefore, we cannot be sure that there will be no impact on the AONB going forward.

The council needs to consider the long-term plans for the site as the original plans for the site were resoundingly rejected in 2019.

The owner's statement that the pub was established in 1850s is incorrect. It was listed as an inn in 1817. 203 years of history wiped out if this change of use is allowed.

Public benefits could be achieved by it remaining as a pub. A domestic dwelling would not be a way of securing its optimal viable use.

It would be brought back to use if the building was sold to a prospective purchaser who wanted it as a public house.

Grindleton (population 723 -census 2001) is not unique in being a small village able to support a pub. Pendleton (nr Clitheroe) has a population of 203 (2001 census). Bolton by Bowland (population 499 -census 2001). Slaidburn (population 351 -census 2001) and all support a thriving pub.

The area has always had a large and thriving licenced trade within the villages. It has not been demonstrated that the nature of the asset in terms of its location prevents all reasonable use as a public house. Therefore, NOT satisfying the first test.6.23 a)

This statement in paragraph 6.27 The moratorium period created by the listing as an asset of community value has not resulted in an acceptable bid from a community group. The

applicant has also approached local building preservation trusts which has been unsuccessful in finding a new owner.

The above statement is inaccurate/subjective- Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has made several bids and above their valuation, the third test is NOT satisfied 6.23 c). An offer from a local charity has also been rejected.

The Grindleton Community Pub Ltd. has funds and enthusiasm to renovate the building; it is not put off as a potential commercial investor.

In the application it has NOT been demonstrated that there is no prospect of the use as a public house being re-activated.

The use as a dwelling is NOT the optimal viable use for the premises. The building will only decline if allowed to by the owner.

The Community IS disadvantaged by the lack of the Duke of York as described previously.

Heritage Statement objections

The Heritage statement assumes, incorrectly, that the proposal is favourable as the listed building is no longer viable as a public house.

Other points are covered in the Planning Design and Access Statement objections.

This planning application has a lot of assumptions and suggestions of what others can do to benefit the owner's position in his planning submission. We stress again this should be looked at as the DUKE of YORK only.

Therefore, Grindleton Parish Council would expect RVBC to dismiss this application and any future applications for change of use of the Duke of York.