

## **Fritwell Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting August 20, 2018**

### **MINUTES**

1. Apologies: Cllr Barlow, Mr. Shellard, the owner of The Kings Head  
  
50 people attended a meeting on 18/01168/F - change of use of the Kings Head from public house to domestic dwelling.
2. Polly Foster, the chair of the PC, provided a brief introduction to those present on the purpose and structure of the meeting.
3. The public were invited to give their opinions, views and comments on the change of use planning application for the Kings Head in East Street.
4. These are the main points raised, grouped in general subjects.

#### **The Application**

It was reported that mixed messages had been heard regarding the owner's plans for the public house premises. Concern about the owner's intentions for the property were raised.

It was noted that there is no evidence on efforts to run a viable business in the Kings Head premises.

It was also noted that the application as published on the Cherwell District Council website contains no detail on the case for changing the use of the Kings Head.

#### **Neighbours**

There have been concerns from immediate neighbours regarding disruption caused by the building work that is being carried out at the Kings Head.

#### **Wildlife**

Local residents to the Kings Head have also reported sighting protected species of bat that are known to roost there.

#### **An Asset of Community Value**

There was lengthy discussion on the Kings Head's status as an "asset of community value" and a question on what, if any, power this affords to prevent the removal of valuable community assets.

Regarding the communication from the Community Infrastructure Officer to the Planning Officer (email of 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018 from Kevin Latimer to James Kirkham) residents expressed surprise that Mr Latimer is not able to provide more support to prevent the loss of a valuable community asset. Residents expressed surprise that the community infrastructure officer stated that "a CV status does not formally have 'weight' in planning terms, it is strongly indicative of the property's social value to the community".

There was particular concern about the loss of the opportunity for social cohesion in the village. We already suffer from rural isolation having lost our regular bus service to Bicester. Given that the village is growing we need to be holding onto any opportunities that might in the future enable us to improve Community and inclusivity.

#### **Village Response to the application**

The Parish Council delivered a questionnaire to all households in Fritwell and received 72 responses. Some responses included comments and it should be noted that some of the responses accepting the change of use had comments to the effect that the Kings Head is currently an eyesore and to see it as a domestic house is better than seeing it standing empty and in disrepair.

Results from the village survey:

Votes for change of use: 17

Votes against change of use: 72

### Questions raised

There was a question about whether Cherwell district Council have issued any enforcement notice to the Kings Head. The clerk confirmed that she would check this.

*It has since been confirmed that the Kings Head was issued with a contravention notice on May 3, 2018, but that an enforcement notice was not issued because the planning application was received before a contravention notice could be issued.*

5. After the public had finished commenting, the Parish Council met together and decided that it would respond to the planning application by strongly objecting on behalf of Fritwell residents.

It was agreed that the clerk would compile a response reflecting the comments made by villagers, and would send the draft around to councillors for comment and amendment. **ACTION Clerk.**

### **ADDED 31 August: Fritwell Parish Council response to planning application 18/01168/F submitted to James Kirkham, CDC:**

Fritwell Parish Council wishes to register a strong objection to application 18/01168/F. The Council wishes to make the following points, which include those raised at a public meeting held on Monday August 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 to discuss this application.

The Parish Council called the public meeting to discuss the application and to gather the views of the residents of Fritwell. This meeting was attended by 49 residents and a poll at the end of the meeting showed 96% objected to the application. This poll was supplemented by a questionnaire sent to every household in the village and 79% of the 72 responses received objected to the planning application.

The new owners of the King's Head are experienced licensees with local market knowledge. There has been no attempt to operate the King's Head as a going concern and the Parish Council understands that the only marketing of the property to third parties has been via an advertising board outside the pub which displayed an invalid telephone number. It is therefore a concern that work to convert the premises for domestic use, and the subsequent retrospective planning application, have been made without any attempt to open the doors of the King's Head as a public house by the current owner.

The King's Head public house appears on the first published ordnance survey map of this area in 1875 and has served the community of Fritwell for over 150 years. It is now the only public house in the village and before its closure it played an important role as a venue for villagers, clubs and societies to meet. In a village that only has one bus service a week having such a facility in the village is very important to prevent issues associated with rural isolation and to assist with village cohesion. The important role that the King's Head played in the village when it was open was recognised by its registration in December 2016 as an Asset of Community Value.

The District Council has an obligation to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. The conversion of

the King's Head to a residential dwelling would result in such a loss and the case for demonstrating the unviability of the pub as a freehold establishment has not been made in the application.

If the retrospective planning application is not approved, the Parish Council would expect Cherwell District Council to take enforcement action to ensure any changes already made to the building to convert it for domestic use, which are in breach of its current planning status, are rectified.