

Save The Queens Ltd
Huckers Cottage
Huckers Lane
Selborne
Alton
Hants
GU34 3JN

10th January 2021

**The Queens Hotel, High Street, Selborne, Alton, GU34 3JH-
SDNP/20/04118/FUL**

Dear Graeme Felstead

Two documents, submitted late on in the consultation process regarding The Queens Hotel, have recently come to our notice. We would like to draw your attention to inaccuracies contained within the statements provided by Craig Matthews, East Hampshire Economic Officer and the 'Thrive Team on Sustainable Economy and Sustainable Tourism' (no author name or consultee body stated). Both documents appear to have been drawn up with little understanding of the broader planning context, or, indeed knowledge of existing facilities within the village.

Planning Policy Comments from the Thrive Team (in paragraph order):

- Visitor accommodation comprises of seven en-suite letting rooms within The Queens Hotel not four, as evidenced by the Davis Coffers Lyons particulars (attached).
- The Thrive Team believe that because this proposal includes an educational facility that will also be available for hire, outside of traditional school operating hours, it represents an alternative type of community infrastructure facility. Is the Thrive Team aware that the Gilbert White Museum already possesses a purpose-built education facility in a more suitable isolated field location with ample parking adjacent to the Museum? Are they also aware that this proposal would replace two public bars and a restaurant open to everyone, all day and that these serviced spaces were available and used by the community for gatherings such as weddings, christening and wakes at NO cost? As is quoted in their statement, policy SD43(2)(c) allows for the provision of alternative community facilities that are inclusive, available, accessible, of equivalent or better quality and do not cause an unreasonable shortfall in provision. This proposal creates less inclusive, less available and less accessible community facilities which are in no way equivalent to what would be lost and would represent a shortfall in provision. Therefore because of this reduction in provision it cannot be the case that the proposed Field Studies Centre represents 'an alternative type of community infrastructure facility as per paragraph 7.227'.

Their statement appears to have taken at face value the applicant's assertion that The Queens Hotel is a redundant building without being aware of the broader planning context, where, as per the Planning Inspectors report, redundancy has not been proved.

- They note that the proposal contributes to certain outcomes set out in the priorities of the 2020-2025 South Downs Partnership Management Plan (PMP); "these facilities make educational, tourism, cultural, heritage and land-use enterprise/economy connections with the area". But, of course, so would The Queens Hotel, - better ones without the need for unnecessary development. There is no need for a vestige of the building's original purpose to be preserved in the form of an infrequently opening Tap Room, "The Tap Room has links with the historic use of the building as a public house", as there is no reason why The Queens should not be operating for its original purpose (unless of course its owners have marketed it as a pub for 24 months at a price commensurate with its condition and there has been found to be no interest and hence non-viability has been proved as per Appendix 3, SDNP Local Plan). The Queens operating as a pub with rooms would better fulfill the priorities of the 2020-2025 South Downs Partnership Management Plan, in particular, the cultural heritage of the SDNP is properly conserved by allowing the building to retain its original purpose.
- The 'Thrive Team' note that, along with the rest of the SDNP, Selborne lacks "sufficient hotel style visitor accommodation" and states because this application allows for five 'Aparthotels' it addresses this need. Selborne has lacked visitor accommodation since The Queens Hotel was closed by its current owners, the applicants, Derek Warwick Developments. It had seven en-suite letting rooms (not four, as above) and these spaces are still extant within the existing plan form of the building. There is no provision shown on the proposed plans for the current application which indicate any 'hotel-like' facilities, or services, for the 'Aparthotels' such as; a service kitchen or restaurant, a fully stocked, open all-day bar, communal spaces, such as a lounge or games room, or a staffed reception area. Therefore, it is hard to see how these apartments would operate as a 'hybrid hotel' in reality they would be self-catering apartments. Once again, The Queens Hotel in its existing form, without the need for development, provides the possibility of genuine hotel-style visitor accommodation with all its attended benefits of additional job and food and drink sales opportunities. In doing so it could, once again, meet the need for visitor accommodation within the village and by providing for a greater number of rooms that those currently proposed fulfill PMP outcomes to an greater extent.

Craig Matthews, Economic Development Office EHDC

In a similar way to the Thrive Team, Craig Matthews appears to base his observations on a comparison between the proposed development and that of a redundant building, rather than The Queens Hotel, which is what this application seeks to replace.

- Given the above observations regarding the loss of an open all hours public house and seven serviced hotel rooms; bars, restaurant, kitchen etc. it seems highly likely that, in contrast to Mr. Matthews opinion, the proposal WOULD

result in a loss of employment in comparison with that offered by a fully functioning pub with rooms. The Gilbert White Museum already operates hospitality and educational facilities on their existing site and there is no indication in the planning application that additional staff would be taken on to work in the re-located Education Centre or run the Tap Room. This proposal might go some way to 'support local business, tourism and the visitor economy' in comparison to the currently empty and unsightly building. But a far greater 'regenerative impact' would be seen from The Queens Hotel operating as a pub with rooms. This would have the additional benefit of not creating a virtual monopoly of the commercial tourist offerings within the village, where plurality of interests and business ownership can ensure greater economic and cultural sustainability.

The Queens is a well-known, historic, much loved and much needed community and tourist facility. By stripping its interior, neglecting its appearance, allowing it to fall into disrepair and refusing to sell it to anyone as a pub for a reasonable price, the owner's hope that, over time, and after multiple inappropriate planning applications, The Queens will only be seen as redundant, an impediment, damaging to the needs of the village and by extension the SDNP. However, if the possibilities presented by this current planning application are judged positive because they are only measured against The Queens in its current form then these consultees have unwittingly encouraged a modus operandi for every developer throughout the land who wishes to extract value from an important community and visitor asset.

Despite the absence of the term 'Change of Use' in its title, this application will fundamentally change the use of The Queens Hotel and turn it into self-catering apartments with an education centre on the ground floor and a Tap Room once in a while. It will result in losses when measured against both policies SD23 and SD43 and for this reason it should be subject to the requirements of a 'robust marketing campaign' as set out in Appendix 3 of the Local Plan. By adhering to this planning policy the pub will either be allowed to flourish once again or its redundancy will be proved at which point applications can be properly judged against its present circumstances.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Caroline Rye.
Chair, Save The Queens Ltd.