**Proof of Evidence of Mr Grenville Earney – on behalf of the Appellant (Derek Warwick Developments)**

**Appeal Reference: APP/Y9507/W/21/3289423**

**Local Planning Authority Reference: SDNP/20/04118/FUL**

**Address: The Queens Hotel High Street Selborne Alton GU34 3JJ**

**Description: *Conversion and extension of the existing Queens building and barn to form 5no. aparthotel suites (C1), a field study centre and tap room (mixed class F.1 and sui generis) and 1no. detached dwelling (C3) within the grounds, with associated parking and landscaping.***

**Date: Tuesday 24 September 2024**

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**1.Introduction & Background**

My name is Grenville Earney. I am a member of Selborne Parish Council. I am a founder of the Gilbert White’s Brewery which I helped to establish at the Gilbert White Museum in 2019 and I assisted in the establishment of the Jubilee Tap Room in the original Queens Building in 2022. I am the current licensee of the premises.

**2. Proof of Evidence**

I note with concern that at its meeting on Weds 17th July the Parish Council elected to make no further comment to that which it had produced previously in objecting to the original planning application. In doing so, it allowed objections made by previous councillors to continue to stand - despite them having no current membership of the Council and denying a significant number of new members the opportunity to form a potentially new and unbiased view of the planning application which you are considering.

In considering the objections lodged by ‘Save the Queens ’et al to the application, there is a lack of clarity in what these groups and individuals are attempting to achieve. They claim 150 objectors united in objecting to the plans but I am not sure of the accuracy of their claim. Indeed, I suspect this ‘list’ may well include individuals who originally objected but are now persuaded that the planning application should be allowed. They also state that much has changed in respect of the application and, in that respect only, they are correct. There has been a marked change in the attitude of members of the community - many of whom now see the work undertaken so far as being of benefit to the village and the wider community in general. The opening of the Tap Room is seen as being a great success with a facility that is welcomed by its many patrons - far more than the limited provision suggested by the original objectors. Similarly, the provision of the flats for holiday and short term rental in the upper floors of the building has breathed new life into an otherwise redundant building that in a previous guise had been the home of failing businesses. Assertions by the original objectors that it was the home of thriving businesses have ignored the context of the previous fifteen years in which, despite money being poured into improved accommodation on the upper floors, it failed to deliver the sort of business that the objectors erroneously describe.

The current application by Derek Warwick Developments seeks to enable it to complete the job of developing the Queens in a way which will enable it to be sustainable in the future. The development of the redundant ‘black barn’ as residential accommodation on an otherwise ‘brown field site ’makes good sense in a village where development opportunities are scarce and would provide family accommodation for the future.

Similarly, the suggested use of the original dining room of the pub, ‘the buttery’, as some sort of community facility should be welcomed by the objectors. This is a space that could have been easily changed by the developer, under permitted development rights, into further accommodation (as a further rental opportunity) but he has elected to apply to make this a facility from which the community could benefit in the widest sense.

The existing ground floor of the Queens building also includes a space that could easily be used as a community shop - being ideally situated in the middle of the village with adjacent car parking next to the High Street. Once again, given its previous use as a pub bar, this suggested change of use from one previously selling alcohol and food into one selling a wider selection of goods, represents only a minor change. Indeed, the Tap Room could legitimately choose to offer a Tap Room shop selling its own products and others in that space under existing approvals.

This now only leaves the application which is to form new accommodation units on the land immediately behind the Queens and adjacent to Huckers Lane. This would lead to the development of a financially secure and sustainable site and provide additional accommodation units that will supplement those on the upper floors of the Queens main building. Objectors who want, unrealistically, to see the Queens restored to its previous position as a pub with rooms and ‘fine dining ’fail to understand the changed nature and demand for such establishments in villages such as Selborne in which there is already another village pub. Had that model been successful previously, the Queens would not have closed in 2015. The nature of current demand has changed significantly in the last eight years with pub closures being frequently reported across the country. The new Tap Room decried by the original objectors, has absorbed such demand as now exists.

In respect of the additional unit that has been put forward in the planning application, I am drawn to the conclusions of the previous planning inspector. I recognise that, in one very small element, that report has been discredited due to a comment which failed to recognise that some trees along the boundary, and included on the original planning documents, had been removed (with the approval of the local authority I might add!!!!). However the well-considered view of the previous inspector in her general comments in response to this original application remain valid ie that this additional unit makes good planning, economic and financial sense.

I wholeheartedly support the application made by the developer for this site.

For the above reasons, it is respectfully requested that the appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted.