

5 October 2018

Councillor Paul Miller
Chair, Development Control Committee
Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Civic Offices
London Road
Basingstoke
RG21 4AH

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Dear Councillor Miller,

Reference: meeting of the Development Control Committee on 10-10-2018 and its consideration of application nos. 17/03772/FUL and 17/03772/LBC – The Purefoy Arms, Preston Candover

We have been asked by more than 100 residents of Preston Candover, about one half of the adult population, to write to you to express their concerns at the development proposals for the Purefoy Arms, Preston Candover which are being considered for approval by the Development Control Committee on Wednesday.

They wish to object most strenuously to these proposals and urge you and your Committee to reject the recommendation of the planning department and to refuse these applications for planning permission and listed building consent.

An approval will fly in the face of everything that Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has tried to achieve over the past 30- plus years, to conserve and protect the special characters of both its urban and rural areas. I draw your attention to the Council's own Conservation Appraisal of Preston Candover, first designated in 1981 but reviewed again in 2003 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

That report states that "Having designated the conservation area the local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that those elements that formed its particular character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced, especially when considering planning applications."

We do not believe that this development will preserve or enhance the historic centre of the village of Preston Candover, and totally refute the planning officer's claim that this development is of "*an appropriate design and relate to surrounding development in a sympathetic manner*". The Purefoy Arms is a dominant building at the central historic core of the village which contains many of the more important historic buildings and those of architectural significance within the parish, including the medieval 'old' church of St Mary the Virgin, North Hall (1769), South Hall (1815), Lower Farm (circa 1730) and the Purefoy Arms itself (circa 1800), plus several others. How is a zinc-roofed, partially flat-roofed building in sympathy with any of these?

We disagree most fervently with the view that "*the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the Preston Candover Conservation Area and would not have an adverse impact upon the heritage and architectural importance of The Purefoy Arms.*"

It beggars belief that anyone with an appreciation of historic buildings and townscapes could come to the conclusion that attaching an alien construction, devoid of any architectural merit, and equal in footprint size, if not larger, to the current public house, would not have an adverse impact! To argue that there is no harm because it is merely a conversion of existing buildings is totally specious as it introduces an entirely different use not just within the curtilage of the property, but attached to it.

Currently, the Purefoy is a single detached building of significant character. If the proposed work is completed it will become a terrace of three buildings – two houses and a pub – incongruous in this rural environment. If approved it can only have a significant detrimental impact on the fabric of the listed building and on its setting within the wider environment of this part of the village. We believe that these applications “will lead to substantial harm to **or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset**”, and as such “*local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.*” (National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 131)

Clearly, there are no public benefits in this proposal sufficient to justify the damaging impact on the fabric, character and setting of the Purefoy Arms.

The current National Planning Policy Framework also argues that in pursuit of “*conserving and enhancing the historic environment*” planning authorities should take into account the “*wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits*” in their planning decisions. We believe that if this application is approved it will, in due course, lead to the total loss of this important community asset.

The planning officer recognises that building two houses for market sale attached to the public house will require conditions to be imposed on noise levels and odour from the pub (conditions 25 and 27) which will add significant new constraints to its operation as a pub and which will inevitably diminish its suitability and attractiveness to prospective tenants. How will these conditions impact on the applicant’s claim that “the pub and its large garden would be suitable for events such as weddings, wakes and parties” when the landlord would be under continuous need to monitor noise levels. Something which is now unnecessary.

Preston Candover is sited on one of the UK’s national cycle routes and is at the centre of a network of public footpaths and bridleways. The Purefoy Arms is the only public house within five miles along the main cycle route. In the summer months the public house garden is often thronged with such visitors and local residents and the noise would, inevitably, be another cause for complaint from the owners of the two adjoining houses.

These buildings may be redundant to the current owners but to a future owner they could be a valuable asset as they would permit an expansion of the public house and its services. If this application is approved it will close off any possibility of that happening in future and, consequently, adversely affects its potential sustainability, a key factor

The applicant also claims that the addition of two letting rooms would help to safeguard the future commercial success of the pub. In that case, why did the applicant not revive the planning permission given to a previous owner (BDB 52089/52090) which would have provided four letting rooms and, more importantly, provide a more effective, sympathetic and potentially more viable use for the “redundant buildings”? If the current application is approved it will prevent any future owner from developing these buildings to provide a more certain and viable future for The Purefoy.

Local residents also challenge the planning officer's claim that *"the proposed development would provide safe ingress and egress and adequate parking provision in accordance with highway requirements"*, when the Highways Officer has objected to the *unsatisfactory* transport statement and the planning officer himself has admitted that the application does not *"provide a policy compliant level of parking."*

Vehicle access to these new houses will be sited on a dangerous blind bend in both directions and vehicles entering the B3046 at this point will create a very serious hazard to other vehicles, often travelling in excess of the 30 mph limit.

How can he argue that *"it has been demonstrated that the proposals would not significantly differ from the existing situation"* when the applicant has not yet provided a motor vehicle parking plan which demonstrates *"the ability of vehicles to access and egress the vehicle parking spaces, including enter, turn and leave the site in a forward gear"*? (see condition 16).

He clearly has no personal knowledge of the situation at many week-ends when vehicles over-flow the car park and fill all the available space around the village green and in front of the church. This will also be exacerbated by the loss of the five parking spaces in front of the storage buildings, currently used for staff parking who will then need to park in the main car park.

Further, can we draw your attention to the large number of conditions attached to this approval statement, many of which refer to "insufficient detail" or "insufficient information" being submitted in both the original and revised applications. See Condition nos. 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,16, 19,20,21, and 22.

Surely, in the interests of good planning this information should be available to officers and councillors before they approve an application of this sensitivity, especially when it affects a listed building. It seems to us, therefore, that in the absence of this information, together with the serious objections outlined in this letter, that this application should be refused and we urge you to take that course.

Finally, we question if Historic England and all of the statutory authorities and National Amenity Societies and others with a right to be consulted have been notified of the listed building application. We see no reference to any of them in the Consultations section.

We hope that it will be acceptable for us to pass a copy of this letter to the other members of the Development Control Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Marriott

Stevan Hoyle

