

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 29/01/2024 9:26 PM from [REDACTED]

Application Summary

Address: The Amazon And Tiger Harvel Street Meopham Gravesend Kent DA13 0DE

Proposal: Change of use to C3 dwellinghouse.

Case Officer: Mrs Alison Webster

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED] Culverstone Gravesend

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Member of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

Comments:

The main reason for this application would appear to be for the landlord to profit from a potential enhanced value to the property if he can change the use. This is despite the property having been built as a pub more than 100 years ago and operated as such for the majority of it's life. The property has ACV status and was once the heart of a very social and integrated rural community.

The main argument in his supplementary statement appears to be that the property is no longer viable as a pub and hasn't been for a long time and he should therefore now be entitled to do with it what he wants. I would question whether the B&B income has ever been included in the company accounts, without that inclusion the accounts cannot be used to uphold a lack of viability. The landlord has made a lot of claims about the local community and why we do not deserve to have a pub.

"Clubs faded by the wayside" - knitting was taking place right up to the COVID closure, the others mentioned have not been there for well over ten years. This ignores all the clubs that continued to use the pub - the share club, Bike Polo, local cycling group, Harvel Singers, H4 and probably others.

He mentions illegal selling of alcohol in the village, but all organised events had a licence. Most events in the village increased the use of the pub either before or after the relevant event.

The village hall does hold events - they are private, by invitation only, mostly held for fundraising purposes and of a size that the pub could not cater for. The gourmet food evenings were once a month and no more than six in a year. H5 brings well over 1,000 people to the village, this could not be catered for by the pub, but when it finished around 4pm many people flocked to the pub to finish their day. The landlord is known to have complained about needing to employ more staff as a result. They even staged their own music events to cater for those not ready to go home. And there is not a free bar, that is a water station for the runners as they run round the course, as far as you can get away from Harvel and the pub on the five mile route, with a limited quantity of beer/prosecco for those runners who are not serious about their times. A lot of the profit from the H5 goes to charity.

The fete is held once a year and has been going for at least 30 years, with many attendees from outside the village. It is finished by 5 pm, after which the many

helpers and attendees went to the pub.

The Harvel Festival didn't even start until 2022, after the pub had been closed. The farm shop had an individual selling high quality organic alcohol on an irregular business, for home consumption, only becoming once a month after the pub had been closed. This was a different market to pub goers and would not have affected the trade of the pub being one Friday and Saturday once a month. "Not supportive of its assets"

The White Horse closed 58 years ago, so hardly relevant, and was on the very outskirts of the village so not somewhere that could easily be walked to by many of the residents, whereas the Amazon & Tiger is in the heart of the village. The post office shop was owned by the family of the landlord's partner before being sold for conversion to residential use, somewhere in the region of 25 years ago.

Everything else on the list other than the bus stop and community bus were lost more than 25 years ago. The bus was stopped by GBC, but not because the community didn't want it or use it.

"Why is the pub not used anymore?"

Harvel is a very rural village but with a very active community, not many villages of this size have a running club of 90+ members ("H4"), a choir of 20, bike polo, share club, local cycle group, active WI, active village hall and many other activities. The pub was always busy, when it was open, and special events were always well attended. The owner was himself a member of H4 for many years, until he withdrew from the village community completely after shutting the pub. The majority, if not all, of the alcohol/food consumed in the pub grounds on hash days was provided by the landlord. And many of the hashers stayed in the pub for the rest of the afternoon after a Sunday hash.

"Events formerly organised by the pub and hijacked"

7a - this was a once a year event organised between the cricket club and H4 to play a cricket match - never a pub event.

7b and 7c - there were private events organised to fund raise for charity and could not be catered for in the pub.

7d Carols by Candlelight - these started in December 2021, after the pub had been closed.

So NOT previously organised by the pub.

The factory has been shut for many years, not relevant.

The cricket club pavilion is not "new" - probably 25+ years old. H4 began using the village hall for full club meetings as the pub could not accommodate 50-60 people. Smaller meetings were still being held in the pub as well as being the start and end point for the runs organised every Tuesday night. H4 only started using the cricket club after the pub closed.

"The community have shown that they do not need the pub"

The hall has always been used for community events, that never previously stopped people using the pub. And usually, before or after those events, people went to the pub. Cinema nights - when they started back in 2019 people bought their drinks in the pub as none were served in the hall and went to the pub afterwards. The hall has only ever been in addition to the pub, serving a different function, it is run on a voluntary basis so only has events when someone is able to run them, mostly not open to the general public or even on a regular basis.

This is not the same as having a pub available to go to six days a week.

The cricket club is only being used in the way it is because the pub is closed - it isn't as comfortable or as amenable as the pub and isn't open to everyone. It isn't open every evening, only when there is cricket practice, matches or when H4 is there. It is a pub substitute when nothing else is available but of limited use. Bike polo only use the rugby club for their training and matches, it isn't open for food or drinking on a regular basis.

That the community has managed to continue to come together in more limited ways shows the strength of the community, but it doesn't show that we no longer need the pub, we are just managing without it as best we can.

His specific examples:

Figure 8 - 950 envelopes to be filled with number bibs, timing chips, safety pins, shoe ties - there is not enough room in the pub to do this, it had been done in the pub previously when the event was smaller. Vigo Rugby Club - this states that it was open for the bike polo club use "on certain weekends" - ie when they had matches, but no food and drink not provided.

Figure 9 - football world cup - this was in 2022 so after the pub was closed.

The landlord has not proved that there is no need for a pub, he has not proved that no-one uses it and he has not proved that it is not viable. He has tried to "prove" these things using information that is wildly out of date, taken out of context or is blatantly untrue. He has refused offers for the pub, including an offer from someone who now runs a very successful pub in the wider area instead. He

has not attempted to market the pub, stating that "marketing would be pointless without on-site accommodation". Instead he incorrectly used the planning department to give him permission to separate the upstairs living accommodation via an LDC specifically to attempt to make the pub unmarketable - but he has not even proved that that has done so.

In depriving the community of a chance to reopen the pub to become the social heart of the village again he is going against the intentions of the draft policy RE5. Whether it has been adopted or not should not be a consideration, it is there and presumably intended to be adopted. He draws attention to policy CS10 but ignores policies CS07, CS08 and CS09 of the Core Strategy 2014 and Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that "planning policies and decisions should enable d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities such as public houses". Ensuring that the pub was properly marketed, leading to it being sold reopened as a pub would comply with that. If, however the planning department were to decide to allow this change of use they would be going against the NPPF, going against their own draft policies and doing great damage to our rural community.

Kind regards