**Minutes of the Appleton with Eaton Parish Council extraordinary meeting**

**at the village hall,**

**Saturday, 13th January 2018 at 10:00am**

Susan Blomerus – Parish Clerk – 29.01.18

**Present:** Mr John Adams, Mrs Susan Blomerus (Parish Clerk), Mrs Mary Carey, Mrs Liz Gilkes, Dr Mark Richards (chairman), Mr Tony Sibthorp, Mrs Anna Yalci

**Also present:** 75 parishioners in attendance

1. **Apologies for Absence:** None
2. **Declarations of interest:** None
3. **Public questions and statements:**

**Comments/concerns raised by parishioners:**

* The plans for the pub show that the kitchen area won’t increase in size by much and the new toilets will consist of one ladies cubicle and one urinal; this isn’t suitable for the running of the pub.
* The community should come to some sort of agreement with regards to the development as we might lose the pub.
* Last remaining pub is an important asset and the green space is an important facility to the community.
* The garden is important to the viability of the pub. If the garden is lost the landlord will lose an income stream from people who will use the garden. If we lose the garden, we will be one step closer to losing the pub.
* Need to come together as a community and use the facility that we all wish to save. Speak to the landlord regarding the changes the community would like to see. Set up a box in the pub for the community to make anonymous comments.
* Need to speak to a planning professional before a decision can be made. We should ask for an extension on the planning application.
* This village has saved the shop and the paddle and rymer weir and we are capable of saving the pub.
* As it’s registered as an asset of community value it does afford some protection. The longer that the pub is struggling the closer it will be to being removed from the community asset list.
* If you have not got the right tenants in the pub then it will fail. The village needs the pub. The pub will be a gold mine with the right tenants. Will the developers invest in the tenants to help them make it a successful business and are they going to provide training for the tenants?
* REL Capital put out a press release yesterday that they have bought 7 sites to develop and they are intending to build 50 houses. The game has changed the pub no longer has the garden; the garden is no longer part of the asset.
* Get professional planning advice, then have another meeting with the community and ask for people’s views once the advice has been received.
* Fight the planning application, if unsuccessful then try and purchase the land/pub
* Andy Scott (of REL Capital) is a professional developer, might be able to negotiate with him and ring fence the pub so that it will not be developed in the future. Concerned that if we as a community fight the application we will lose negotiation advantages.
* We could have a consultant look at the pub and how the pub could be run and be successful, but this will be expensive.
* Should not oppose the application completely but come to a compromise.

**Questions raised by parishioners:**

**Q: Can you update us on the status of the Neighbourhood Plan?**

A*: The Neighbourhood Plan is not at the stage where the district council will take it into consideration when considering planning applications.*

 *The parish council have been informed that Longworth’s draft Neighbourhood Plan was taken into account when considering a planning application.*

**Q: Has the Pub Working Group had discussions with villages that were in similar situations?**

A: *Most of the village’s bought their pubs from Greene King and the pubs were for sale.*

**Q: Are the parish council intending on employing professional help?**

A*: The parish council know that Hawthorn Leisure will have professional help and the parish council would like to employ professional help to put together a solid letter of opposition. The parish council suspects that this process will involve appeals. Assuming we want to retain the pub, carpark and the recited garden we will have to fight. We will need funding to have the necessary expertise.*

**Q: Do we have any idea if Hawthorn Leisure is happy to sell and if so what would the value be?**

A: *Hawthorn Leisure has been asked if they are interested in selling and they are not. The parish council has not been informed what the value would be. The average price for a public house purchase in the UK is approximately £300 000.*

1. **Planning:**

Dr Richards speech:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for giving up your Saturday morning to be present at today’s extraordinary general meeting (EGM).
The objective of today’s meeting is to address a planning application regarding the garden of the plough pub and the building of 2 detached houses on the site. The Plough is important to the village as it is the only remaining pub in Appleton. The garden is an important community amenity enjoyed by villagers of all ages. It is used in the fine months for socialising by families providing a safe space for children to play in sight of parents away from the road. The garden has been used to hold significant village events such as the Jubilee celebrations in 2012, it was regularly used by the Aunt Sally team, drawing custom from away teams and continues to be a meeting place for the cricket team, football teams, children from Appleton school often visit after school has ended and for the tennis club, the garden has been host to their annual barbecue, not to mention village residents’ birthday parties and other group events. These things highlight the pub garden as an important green space centrally located in the village and is considered very important to residents in the village.

Hawthorn Leisure first approached the parish council in March 2017 with a proposal to build 2 or 3 properties on the site of the garden, removing its use from the pub entirely. An EGM was held at the time and the response from the village was almost unanimously against development of the garden.
Hawthorn Leisure submitted an application in December 2017 to build two detached houses on the site of the garden, citing the unviability of the business and the garden as surplus land. The application also states that a new garden will be situated where the current toilet block is, with toilets being relocated inside and a new extension to the kitchen being constructed.
This is very similar to the original proposal that was wholly rejected by the village at the time.
Hawthorn Leisure seems determined to develop the garden justified by the need to invest in the pub and have recently removed the garden from use by the pub. It appears that use of the garden may only return if planning is refused.

Since May 2016 a Neighbourhood Plan steering group have been developing a neighbourhood plan to provide a framework that will influence future development in the village. In respect to protecting the Plough garden from development the Plough and its garden have been registered as an Asset of community value, the garden has been designated as an important green space and the site also lies in the conservation area of the village. However this doesn’t exclude the garden from development, these moves help to protect the site from development as these become material considerations in any future planning decisions by the Vale of the white Horse District Council.

The parish council also set up a pub working group, spearheaded by Mrs Mary Carey, to follow up the on the views expressed at the EGM of March 2017.

The parish council discovered last night that REL Capital appear to have made a deal regarding developing the garden with Hawthorn Leisure. REL Capital is property developers that appear to have a history of converting pubs into residential properties. If the pub remains unviable with or without investment, particularly with the loss of the garden this could then progress to delisting the pub as a community asset and converting it to a residential property.

At the last EGM the response in the event of a planning application was to object. However in the interest of balance and it may be the case that some residents of Appleton may support the application I will briefly outline the options in front of us. The parish council have identified 3 distinct options for consideration based on that Hawthorn leisure still retain ownership of the garden:

1: Oppose the application. This will send a message to Hawthorn Leisure that we do not want any development in the pub garden. If planning is rejected we may regain use of the garden and may be in a position to buy the pub as Hawthorn would not be able to make a profit on the development of the garden. However, a consequence of this is that Hawthorn Leisure will likely appeal and while this process goes on they may elect to close the pub on a profitability basis and we may lose our only pub.

2: Agree to some development in the pub garden such as a single house. This would be undesirable for Hawthorn Leisure as they would lose profit but the community could look at purchasing the pub at a higher price with or without the works on the pub to make up their lost profit. This would result in retention of the pub and access to some of the pub garden. But this may prove to be prohibitively expensive for the community to be realistic.

3: Support the planning application but to ask for conditions on the planning permission that states the minimum amount of investment into the refurbishment of the plough. This would allow the community to have an input into how the plough is developed and may provide an opportunity to buy the pub at the lowest sale price. However, the garden will be lost and the improvements on the pub may not prove to increase its viability.
Clearly negotiations around the pub with Hawthorn Leisure are complicated by the arrangement with REL and negotiations with HL may prove fruitless.

Thank you for your patience, I will now open the meeting to the floor and invite you to make comments. Can I please emphasise that this is a planning meeting and we are discussing the planning application put in front of us, so please could all comments be relevant to the planning response that we will send to the District council. Thank you.

Mrs Mary Carey: (Pub Working Group)

Mrs Mary Carey said that after the EGM in March 2017 it was clear that the community was in favour of having a community pub. The pub working group started out in July/august 2017 to look into the option of having a community pub. Mrs Carey explained that the parish does have a fantastic community shop but the community pub is a different situation. The pub working group visited other community pubs and have read about successful cases. Before the pub can be purchased, the community would need to raise a significant amount of capital. There would need to be a board of directors, and there would need to be people involved with many skills representing finance, management etc. Suitable tenants would need to be appointed. Ultimately, the community need Hawthorn Leisure to be prepared to sell the pub. The pub working group did approach Hawthorn Leisure but at present, they are not interested in selling the pub.

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| **Planning**  |
| **(i)** | **P17/V3032/FUL** | Plough Inn Eaton Road Appleton ABINGDON OX13 5JR | A development of surplus land to the rear of The Plough Inn, Appleton to provide two detached homes. As part of the same works, the pubs outdated external WC block will be demolished to make way for a larger garden. The pub will also have a small extension to accommodate new (internal) WC's and an extended kitchen.**The parish council decided to apply for an extension. The parish council were unanimous in intending to object to the planning application. The parish council intends to seek legal advice and advice from a professional planning consultant. The parish council agreed that it is important to find out if the garden has been sold and if so, if the sale was legal in respect to the designation of The Plough as an Asset of Community Value. The parish council agreed to organise a second meeting to inform the village of the professional advice that they have received.**  |

1. **Matters for report:** None
2. **Date of the next meeting:** The next meeting of the Parish Council is to be held on Monday 12th February 2018 at 7:15 in the village Hall.

Meeting ended 12:00pm