

Date 03/07/2026 14:08:41

Subject Baker Arms.

Dear Mike,

I understand that the matter of the Baker Arms will come up at the next parish council meeting.

For the record, I am immensely frustrated about how this matter has progressed and, apparently, concluded. We made a genuine attempt to find a solution that would have provided a community pub and it has backfired in our face. It did require both Macs and the community to accept the principle of a win-win, focus on the bigger picture and compromise. We believe that we have spent material time and money taking in account reasonable community requests (including providing a permissive way through the site under the control of the community) adjusting our expectations in the face of how the community wanted to run the pub (despite our opinion that this was too complex to ensure long term sustainability of offer) and providing for specific design requests. However, this has not been seen this way by the community who appear to believe that we have not offered anything of value. Just engaging with the community should have been seen of value – we don't always do it and perhaps now we will be 'once bitten twice shy'. I agree that the process was not perfect, for example the initial application changed the access route from that agreed as statutory and other 3<sup>rd</sup> parties became involved, but the consultants had been instructed to revert it back. Nonetheless, I urged the community representative to focus on the big picture and potential win for the community. What became clear, and was the sting in the tail of the eventual 'support', was that the community position that "*we have consistently expressed our preference for the whole site to remain in community use*" – as expressed in writing to the planners. This was never our offer, it made a mockery of our good faith attempt to engage with the community and was a clear attempt to move from a win-win to a win-lose to our detriment. We were not going to succeed in the balance of policies in the planning process, including those in relation to Listed Buildings, without strong and genuine community support.

I am aware that some in the community want to result to legal action to try and force a right of way through the site. We will deal with that when it arises, but it is just symptomatic of the community's win-lose approach, considering we had offered a permissive way through the site at the control of the community for perpetuity. Having been forced into what we believe will inevitably be an utterly self-defeating and avoidable lose-lose scenario we are now having to secure the site as we remain liable, as occupiers for visitors – both invited and trespassers.

Oliver mentioned the possibility of attending next week's parish council meeting. The challenge I have is two-fold – clearly elements of the village are as angry as me but, while I raised the point with Oliver, we are in a position of parishioners filming our team and contractors. I am not a politician and have little motivation to come to a public meeting where filming is a possibility and I have no guarantee as to summary presentation. However, the second point is more material. My recent discussion with Oliver indicates no move from the community in terms of solution. Plan A appears to secure the full site from us having enabled the lose scenario and Plan B appears to seek to consider enforcing this through legal action. Both routes focus on a win-lose to our detriment, undervalue the fact that we remain owners of this site and perhaps underappreciates the likelihood and consequence of a lose-lose scenario – which is rapidly falling outside our control as more extreme opinions take hold. We have been advised that, with community co-operation, there is a good chance of success at appeal but, in the face of the above, clearly there is no point in trying. There appears no willingness to find the 'off-ramp' on the route to a likely lose-lose, to everyone's detriment.

It is all so frustrating – the community should have a community pub by now and we should be away, having parted with the community on good terms.

You are free to publish the above albeit only in its entirety.

Kind regards  
Tom