

20/02864/F - The Windmill Pub

The Windmill is our local pub, and we have used it for a decade. Unfortunately, a period of poor management a couple of years ago put an otherwise great pub into difficulties, and the landlord has decided to convert to residential as a result. It goes without saying that hardly anyone was interested in buying pubs during the period that it was illegal to open pubs, and that has been a huge impediment to actions to save the pub over the last 18 months. We are in the ridiculous position that we may now lose community pubs across the city due to landlords taking advantage of the Covid crisis to convert pubs while the industry is in a crashed state.

It's therefore up to our elected councillors to step in and prevent this attack on our crucial community facilities, that comes at a time when we are about to need social venues more than ever - to repair the psychological harm that years of isolation has inflicted on so many of us. I therefore urge the committee to reject this application to convert the pub to flats.

A commercial offer at the pub's business use-class value has been made by another pub landlord, but refused. The owner is currently marketing the site at the value expected for residential use-class, not that for a pub. This is a very important distinction, and both the planners and committee **must** take account of this difference. Remember that almost no business value anywhere would be competitive against residential values (and this is why we have planning use-classes).

On the issue of housing need, this area does not need more flats. Over 1,000 flats are about to be built less than 100m from the pub, with many already having planning permission, which will utterly transform the housing balance in the local area.. On top of that, big student accommodation blocks are also about to be built, with some of those also already having planning permission. The population within 200m of this pub is about to increase by several thousand young-ish people who like pubs! It's quite obvious that this will be a huge boost to the viability of this pub, and hence the recent increased interest in it. Again, the fact that the report doesn't even mention the thousands of new residents coming to this area, and the effect this will have on demand for community facilities, is a serious flaw in the report.

Once again I call on the planning committee to do their bit to help our communities recover from Covid, by stopping the fire-sale of irreplaceable historic business-space that has been temporarily unviable because of the virus.

Dr Mark Wright

Former Councillor for Hotwells & Harbourside Ward/Cabot Ward 2005-2021