

## STATEMENT A14 – Steve Hawes

Policy DM6 requires that planning proposals that involve the change of use of an established pub must prove one of two things to be successful, ie

1. Prove that the site is no longer viable as a pub, or
2. Prove that there is a diverse range of pubs within the locality.

Neither ground has been satisfied in the application relating to the Windmill.

### Ground 1 - Viability

- The fact that the pub ceased to be profitable during the run-up to its closure by the current owner in 2020 (before the Covid lockdown) does not indicate that it cannot be viable again. Less active management of the pub had been apparent, eg closure of the food offering and declining choice and quality of the ales.
- There is an experienced and successful pub operator in place who wishes to buy the pub and run it as a viable business.
- Current planning applications for the nearby area around Bedminster Green will if approved lead to the construction of hundreds of flats, as well as student residences, demonstrating the need to retain existing community assets and promising increased viability for the nearby Windmill.
- Support from the existing community has been demonstrated through the pledges of £174k received during the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt for the community to buy the pub. A much larger total is likely to have been raised were it not for the economic impacts of covid at the time. And on the planning website there has been an overwhelming number of objections (recorded as 166 in the Case Officer's paper) and negligible support for converting the pub to flats .

### Ground 2 - A diverse range of pubs within the locality

- There is only one currently operational pub within the locality of Windmill Hill - that is the Rising Sun. Although very welcome, it doesn't provide enough space for the numbers and range of people who used the Windmill or the many different events that the Windmill hosted and could again. The landlord of the Rising Sun is supportive of the Windmill reopening.
- The Case Officer's paper provides a list of pubs which are claimed to be within a definition of an estimated maximum walking distance of 800m and a time to walk of 10 minutes. But some of them are not pubs. And as the paper points out, 'The Case Officer has included other facilities in his report that local residents point out are not suitable, eg "Boys Brigade' centre was converted to flats years ago; and The Green House is not a community centre, it is just the offices of the 'Federation of City Farms' headquarters. The officer appears not to have checked out his recommendations before putting them in his report to the committee.'

The Case Officer's references as to which pubs may be accessible by walking within 10 minutes and 800 metres need to take account of the fact that it is not normally possible to walk 'as the crow flies'. Local knowledge has shown that only the Rising Sun falls within this range. Good practice also after dark is to use routes which feature streets with houses and cars and are suitably lit, while avoiding deserted spaces which are not overlooked, dark alleyways, subways and parks. Routes to many of the 14 pubs listed in the report are affected by these concerns. Most local people are

aware of crime in Victoria Park including pedestrians being held up, robbed or attacked. Police warnings not to walk through alone after dark have been issued. And East Street, where a number of the pubs are sited, is recorded as being of concern to the police due to anti-social behaviour and criminality.

Windmill Hill residents enjoyed and patronised the Windmill when it was open and are eager to do so again. It shares provision in this locality only with The Rising Sun. The Windmill was and should be again a 'community pub' where we are likely to meet and get to know our neighbours and share neighbourhood friendship and solidarity. We are not likely to meet our neighbours in the pubs further afield which especially cater, rightly, for their own local communities. There has been a pub on the site of the Windmill for more than 150 years and the facility should not be destroyed to give a temporary custodian an opportunity to benefit from the current housing market.