

STATEMENT A24 – Sarah Holway

I have lived on Windmill Hill for 20 years; the Windmill Pub is integral to our community and cannot be replaced. I object fully to the planning application.

The size and layout of the Windmill pub mean it is unique. It has a large bar area with a separate raised seating area which we would use for smaller community group meetings. It has a large family room, separate to the bar area, which we would use for film nights, for hiring a dj to put on a community event etc. This is not replicated in any other suitable local spaces.

The policy requirements of Policy DM6 are not met because there is only one other local pub, which is also too small for the needs of the community. All other pubs listed by the applicant/planning officer are too far away. In terms of distance, there is only one local pub, the Rising Sun, that meets the criteria set out in the applicants definition of 'locality' as in within 10 minutes walk and up to 800 metres away; that pub is much smaller and not able to meet the community needs of the Windmill Hill residents in terms of a place to gather together. This does not meet the criteria to have a diverse range of pubs

All the other pubs listed by the applicant and planning officer are over 10 minutes walk and over 800 metres away. Another local person has mapped all of the pubs listed as suitable alternatives in terms of distance and confirmed this. For example, the Steam Crane is named; I trialled walking to this pub from my house and it took 18 minutes at a distance of 0.76 miles/1223 metres on well lit roads. This is outside of the applicants and planning officers definition of locality and therefore does not meet the policy requirements of Policy DM6.

Windmill Hill has already lost one pub to flats. When I moved to Windmill Hill, there was another pub called The Fox on Somerset Terrace; this has already been turned into flats over a decade ago. It is not appropriate for our community to lose another pub.

Equalities: In terms of equalities, as a woman walking around my area, I need to feel safe and it is not appropriate for me to have to walk over 10 minutes to access a pub, which would also have challenges for disabled people and the elderly people in our area in terms of access.

Windmill Hill is more isolated/ less accessible than other areas and so easily accessible community spaces like the pub are very important. If you do not know the Windmill Hill area, there are only 2 routes off via a road – any others are through Victoria Park which is not ok to go through after dark or down unsafe narrow unlit cut throughs. It is also on a very steep hill which is difficult for older people within our community and for some disabled people. It is important to recognise this because this is part of what makes retaining the Windmill even more important for the community.

Viability: In the last few years, it felt like the pub was being run down. There was no investment in the pub, aside from painting the family room once, and the food offer declined because they used a lot of pop up ventures. This could be reversed by a new buyer. There were still many busy nights and sold out nights however; New Years for example! There is also potential income of the flats to be accounted for. Either rented out long term or via Airbnb this rental would be a large financial boost; over £25k per annum for Airbnb for example based on similar setups on the hill. This would instantly negate any short fall.

Current Offer on the pub: The owner is has 'shaken hands with the developer' on a 500k price; the pub is valued as a pub as significantly less than this. There is a fair offer on the table to keep the pub as a pub. The house prices in the area have increased a lot since the owner bought the pub; but as he bought it as a pub, he should have to sell it as a pub at the appropriate value for that.

Personal view points

As a local resident. I went to the Windmill a few times every week; I took my family there, I went to nearly every film club night, birthday drinks there, I met my friends on my way home – popping in to see which neighbours were propping up the bar and whether I could join them. It was a beacon of friendliness and welcome to Windmill Hill, and, as a single person then, it provided me with an ease of loneliness and a sense of always having somewhere to go where I would be welcomed and was a part of my community. This experience is not unusual; it's the shared experience of so many of us on Windmill Hill that used the pub not only as a place to get a drink but as a shared place to know we belonged in our community and to feel connected to our community.

Windmill Hill is a more isolated community because there are only 2 routes into it and we are on a very steep hill. We need to have a larger pub that we can go to as a community that is on Windmill hill itself and does not need for lone females to walk across a dark park at night, or through Whitehouse lane which is a warehouse area unsafe at night. We are a strong community and the Windmill is our hub and stops isolation and loneliness in our area as well.

There has been an offer to keep the pub as a pub but this has not been accepted as it is lower than the asking price but is agreed as the market value for the pub currently; there should be a limit on the profit that the current owners can make from what is (rightly) listed as an asset of community value. I object to the pub being changed into flats in order to make the current owners a profit, when the community loses hugely. The Bedminster Green regeneration is ongoing and will add to footfall in the area. This regeneration is mainly 1 - 2 bedroom flats and we do not need more of these in our area. There are significant parking issues on the hill and the flats do not come with any proposed spaces.

The owners have left it without care and this is only indicative of them wanting to only sell it as residential, and not being truly open to selling it as a pub and as market value for a pub.

Our area will be significantly affected if this planning application is granted; we will lose the heart of our community forever.

Please do not agree this application and let us instead keep our unique space as our beloved pub.

Photo notes: My house is 2 mins walk from the Windmill. This is my fast paced walk to the Steam Crane (incorrectly listed as an alternative pub) on well lit roads. Any shorter routes are still over 900 yards and run through or adjacent to the cemetery which is completely unlit as in photo below.

