

Cambridge City Council
Guildhall
Cambridge
CB2 3OJ

FAO: Clare Blair - Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Growth

16th June 2010

Dear Clare,

Re: Planning protection for community Public Houses in Cambridge.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future has noted with concern the continuing spate of closures of community public houses in Cambridge and their proposed redevelopment as housing. Recent examples of this we can list are the Penny Ferry, Jubilee, Hat & Feathers and Fleur de Lys. We believe that the provision of community pubs, outside of the main centre of Cambridge, is essential to promoting local community, reducing car use and encouraging sensible drinking. We also believe they are often vitally important to the local heritage and a 'sense of place'.

We note that the Cambridge Local Plan (Policy 5/11) offers protection to Community Facilities and states that they are "*essential to the quality of life of residents*" and "*must be conveniently situated*". The policy states that to remove such facilities it must be demonstrated there is "*no longer a need within the local community for the facility or that the need can be met at an alternative facility of similar accessibility for its users*". However, the definition of Community Facilities in the Local Plan is limited to uses falling within Class D1 (and others) but does not include Class A4 (Public Houses).

We would argue that this is an anomaly that should be addressed within the Local Development Framework and that a Supplementary Planning Document should be produced to include this. We would also argue that any SPD should also include a further 'test of viability' for community public houses in order to address an imbalance in the market that means community public houses, with their associated car parks and gardens, will almost always be worth more as development land than as businesses in Cambridge. This imbalance means that owners could profit by deliberately running down a perfectly viable business in order to bolster a case for lucrative redevelopment. For this reason we feel that community public houses in Cambridge should be subject to the same viability tests that are applied to public houses in rural and local centres in the surrounding Districts of East Cambridgeshire (Planning Policy 135) and South Cambridgeshire (Policy SF/1 Protection of Village Services and Facilities). We have included with this letter a copy of a Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) document on this issue that also outlines how such a 'viability test' can be carried out by Planning Authorities.

There are many problems facing public houses in the UK and the rate of closures is still running at 39 a week. The community pub is especially under threat and requires protection if we are not to end up losing them in large sections of the city while drinking is concentrated in larger and more impersonal establishments in central areas. While we would not argue that a community pub which is demonstrably unviable and for which there was "*no longer a need within the local community*" must be retained, we would argue that the market is skewed against them and that they need some reasonable planning protection in order to survive where they are potentially

viable businesses; particularly where they have important historic connections or are situated in Conservation Areas or on riversides.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss the issue of preserving the local community public house which is such an important part of Cambridge's heritage and quality of life.

Kind regards



Carolin Göhler

CC. Simon Payne - Cambridge City Council Director of Environment and Planning
David Roberts - Cambridge City Council Head of Policy & Projects
John Preston - Cambridge City Council Historic Environment Manager
Sarah Cass - Cambridge City Council Planning Policy Manager
Cambridge City Councillors
CAMRA (Cambridge and District)
De Freville Residents Association
Chesterton Residents Association

Cambridge Past, Present & Future –

a charity working to keep Cambridge and its surroundings special by positively influencing planning developments, delivering environmental education and managing the green spaces and historic buildings in its care – for the benefit of all.

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