

Email from Keith Birch to Punch Pubs – 3 May 2022

Thank you for your recent note and hope you had a relaxing bank holiday weekend.

So you're aware, our first 'Save the Bull' Action Group meeting was held at the local village hall last Thursday evening.

We were delighted to see over 80 residents from all facets of the community were in attendance with quite a few unable to gain entry due to the restricted size of the room. A much larger room will be arranged for any future public meeting.

During the meeting, the formal matters of establishing the Action Group were agreed together with forming the Group's initial Management Committee. This committee now has 7 members, including myself as Chairman and my colleague, Brian Caffarey, as Secretary. Over 60 people joined the Group on the evening with more applications being received since.

We expected the Questions and Discussion segment of the meeting to be quite lively and we weren't disappointed! I imagine nothing quite gets the ire of a local community than any perceived threat to their local pub.

During this open discussion session, it was obvious that the residents were exercised by a number of matters, not least:

- The Bull has experienced significant underinvestment over many years, reflected in The Bull's core offer being significantly less appealing (food, facilities, drinks choice, etc) compared to other local venues. A show of hands produced virtually unanimous agreement that The Bull had become a less attractive venue in recent years
- Building 6 properties behind The Bull is likely to cause significant disruption to on-going trade during construction
- Many believe, in particular, that the pub car park and beer garden would need to close during construction, significantly reducing the appeal of the pub. Some consider that the pub would need to shut down completely during construction, with the risk that fewer customers would use it if and when it re-opened
- With other more suitable building sites becoming available in the parish, there is now little or no need for the land behind The Bull to be developed
- Without a significant investment in the internal fabric of the pub, coupled with the negative impact of an access road running through the car park, The Bull seemed likely to continue to decline and be an even less appealing destination in future. In time it could even be forced to close due to being an uneconomic operation
- Should The Bull close due to continued decline, many felt that Punch would likely sell the pub building as a residential dwelling

We acknowledge your comments that *'the disposal of the Bull is not currently part of our thinking'* and that *'all options are being explored in order to support the pub and we will engage with local residents, parish council and most importantly for us our Publican who operates the pub'*. We strongly urge Punch to reconsider their position on the disposal and investment issues.

The Action Group now has a strong mandate from the wider Much Hadham community to fully pursue its aim of *Securing The Bull's future As A Thriving Pub*. In the absence of any substantive

proposals from Punch, the Action Group will now press on with a vigorous campaign to pursue this aim and will be urgently considering all possible options.

Kind regards,

Keith Birch
Chairman, Save the Bull Action Group