

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF RUSHBURY PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY
22ND. MAY AT 8.00 PM AT RUSHBURY VILLAGE HALL.

2156. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors T. Flashman and Mrs J. Guthrie.

2157 PRESENT.

Dr.C. Stevenson (Chairman,) Councillors Mrs S. Madeley, M. McFarland, A. Richards and 86 members of the public.

2158. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

Councillor M. McFarland declared a personal interest in Planning Application 17/01687/FUL.

2159. The meeting was called to discuss Planning Application 17/01687/FUL. The chairman outlined the application then asked for a show of hands object/support. The majority of people objected. The chairman opened the meeting for comment from the floor. Comments included concerned of the loss of a meeting place in a small rural village, the loss of a eating place for tourists in an AONB, loss of employment for local youngsters and a venue for functions. Rushbury and Cardington Young Farmers Club are proposing to apply to make The Longville Arms an asset of Community Value and they asked for support with the application. Following the open session parish councillors met to discuss their response to the application. They agreed to submit the following objection to Shropshire Council's planning officers.:-

Rushbury Parish Council objects to this application. We have taken into account in our considerations views expressed by parishioners during the public consultation session at a very well attended extraordinary meeting of the Council as well as comments submitted to Shropshire Council.

We are unconvinced by some of the evidence presented in the application which contains material the relevance of which is unclear but omits important information. Of particular concern are the 'two residential properties within the curtilage'. Our understanding is that these are converted outbuildings permission for which was granted on condition that they are used as holiday accommodation in association with the public house and are as such restricted in their use. It is not specifically stated that the application seeks a change of use of these properties to open market residential accommodation but we would object to this on the grounds that they provide a valuable element of the local tourist economy.

The central premise of the application is that the Longville Arms is no longer a viable business and that there is no prospect of it becoming such. The sweeping statement is made that it 'has suffered a trading loss each of the last ten years that it has traded' while evidence is only presented for the period since 2012. We heard contrary evidence that in the past it has been well patronised and former licensees were able to make it an economic success. We also heard evidence that the customer experience offered since 2012 was of a poor quality and it is possible to interpret the decline as a downward spiral of poor service leading to fewer customer

numbers and hence the lack of welcoming ambience that is expected in a licensed establishment. We are left with the impression that the business would have been successful if a different management ethos had been adopted. No evidence is presented that the holiday accommodation was marketed intensively which could have generated extra income. Additional facilities such as the children's play area have been neglected.

While the increase in business rates is noted there is no evidence that any relief has been sought or indeed any other assistance with promoting and sustaining the business.

We dispute the statement that the premises have been marketed 'at a price that realistically reflects the value of the property considering all its component elements'. The 'two separate residential properties' seem to have been valued as open market residential housing while we believe that they are holiday accommodation and hence have a lower value. Evidence is presented that the main building is in need of extensive renovation. There seems to be little or no goodwill left in the business. We are not convinced that these factors have been taken into account in the valuation for marketing which we understand is well in excess of the purchase price. Additionally we note that the property has not been advertised intensively locally and that the market has not been tested by offering it at auction.

The relevance of most of the section on planning policy is lost to us as it does not appear to apply to the application. Similarly we see no relevance in the references to the development of the Wenlock Edge, the application will not of itself generate any funds and there can be no guarantee that any funds generated by the sale of the premises would be applied to this project. We refute the assertion that the Wenlock Edge Inn will provide equivalent or enhanced provision in lieu of the Longville Arms, it is currently closed, there is no immediate prospect of it reopening and it is too far from Longville. Locals and visitors in the area want a pub that they are able to walk to. It is perhaps optimistic or even arrogant to assume that those whose local facility has been closed would choose to patronize an establishment owned by those responsible for the closure.

The Longville Arms is geographically and socially at the centre of the Longville community. It is the only public house within a mile of the centre of Longville and the only facility for social gatherings within the hamlet. It has good facilities including a function room and has been used not only by local individuals but by diverse groups. Notably these include Rushbury and Cardington Young Farmer's Club, darts, domino and air rifle teams, Brockton Gun Club, the NFU and the Masonic Fellowship. Local facilities for social events are vital to combat rural isolation. We regard the Longville Arms as vital to social fabric of Longville and this is a major reason for our objection.

We are also concerned about the effect on the vital tourist industry within the AONB. There are a number of B&Bs, caravan and camping sites within the locality and their customers seek a local facility to provide drink and meals that has in the past been provided by the Longville. A good local pub is an important part of the offer in attracting customers to tourist facilities. The pubs themselves offer employment opportunities particularly part-time work for teenagers which is

an introduction to the world of work in a relatively sheltered environment. The effect on the local economy and hence employment prospects is a further reason for our objection.

We understand that a local organisation and local individuals wish to nominate the Longville Arms for listing as an Asset of Community Value. We will support them in this and a councillor has been nominated and agreed to act as the liaison person with the group.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.