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100 Fetter Lane
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19 March 2018

Your Ref: AMAB – PAT566-1174626

By email: abrodie@dacbeachcroft.com

Dear Sirs,

Re. Royal Hunt Public House, 177 New Road, Ascot, SL5 8PU Asset of Community Value Nomination

This letter responds to your letter of 22 November 2017 setting out your objection, on behalf of your client Patrick Ruddy Homes Limited, to the nomination of the above property as an Asset of Community Value.

Having considered the facts presented, I am content that in relation to S88 (2) (a) the building was used in the relatively recent past for the furtherance of social interests in the community. However, the recent past is not defined and therefore I sense that what is currently the recent past is now approaching the more distant past.

With regard to S88 (2) (b), I note that the premises have not been in use as a public house for a period approaching 3 years. During this time its ownership has changed hands, following unsuccessful attempts to attract a purchaser to maintain its previous use. Those seeking to list the asset have not taken any steps to put forward any proposals beyond listing the property as an asset and there have been no firm approaches by the community to purchase the asset for use as a public house.

CAMRA has cited a local publican who believes the premises could potentially attract sufficient revenues to become sustainable, which is disputed by the evidence presented by you in the Viability Study prepared by Savills. It does seem clear that, in order to become sustainable, it would be necessary to purchase commercial kitchen equipment at a considerable capital cost to ensure the facility could operate not solely as a “wet” establishment. This would be in addition to the cost of purchasing the premises.

CAMRA have now had a not insignificant time to commence meaningful negotiations to purchase the property, which would be a necessary first step to the property being brought back into use as a public house. CAMRA have been aware of the closure of the property and the intention of the owners not to use the premises as a public

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house for some considerable time before they applied for a listing, as their organisations was cited as an interested party when the property was previously listed. CAMRA have had the time of the first and the second listing to come forward with a meaningful proposal for retention for community use as a public house and they have failed to do so.

I conclude that they are highly unlikely to be able to do so now or they would have already done so. This is because, with every week that passes, the property becomes more expensive to refurbish. Moreover it has a value for conversion, in an area where property is at a premium in a strong market, meaning the purchase price is likely to continue to rise despite the building's deterioration. An organisation that was serious about a community purchase with a view to sustainability would surely have opened the negotiations by now,

There can, of course, be no certainty that such an approach would not be made on behalf of the community in the course of the next 5 years. The issue is whether it is realistic to think that this will happen. This is a matter of judgement. For the reasons above and below I do not think there is any realistic chance of this asset being purchased as a community asset.

It is clear that market conditions for public houses have been challenging for many years and show no signs of easing. It does not strike me as realistic to think, with the premises having been closed as a public house for almost 3 years, that an investor is now likely to come forward with sufficient capital to purchase, refurbish and operate the facility profitably in this market. I can also see no signs to indicate that the market is likely to become any more favourable in the years ahead.

I have therefore concluded that, following my review under S192 of the Localism Act 2011, I do not feel it is appropriate that this property is included in Bracknell Forest Council's List of Assets of Community Value. CAMPRA will be duly notified.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart McKellar
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