**From:** Hugh Pidgeon
**Sent:** 24 November 2016 23:41
**To:** Planning
**Subject:** Objection to Planning Application 16/02030/F

Thursday, 24th November ’16, 11.25 pm

I enclose an objection to Planning Application **16/02030/F**, for the attention of Bob Neville.

Your sincerely,

**Hugh Pidgeon**

**For the immediate attention of Bob Neville**

**16/02030/F**| Erection of a single storey building providing 3 No en-suite letting rooms - re-submission of **16/01525/F**| **The Pheasant Pluckers Inn Burdrop Banbury OX15 5RQ**

**From Hugh Pidgeon,** ‘Burdrop Green’, Sibford Gower, Banbury, Oxon OX15 5RQ

I write to you as one who lives directly opposite the site of the pub the owners are now calling the Pheasant Pluckers Inn, and who stand with my family to be directly affected by the decision the District Council make on this application.

I read with dismay the attempt yet again on your website - the owner’s 19th application on this property - to demonstrate that the pub is not viable as a pub,  that building on the car park is an essential part of the owners’ survival plan and not to grant him permission is tantamount to forcing him into the only other option he believes will then be open to him “to re-apply for change of use to residential.”

This is no ordinary application.   In itself, this is the third attempt by the owners to extend the property out into the car park of the pub.  The first was an application in 2013 put in by a third party for two houses to test the council’s resolve; it was turned down.  The second **Planning Application 16/01525/F** was refused only a month ago.  But this is the 19th of a drip feed of applications that have besieged the local Council for the last nine years, 8 of which have been applications for change of use to a private dwelling.  The applicant could not be clearer in anticipating the 9th.  The applications have been punctuated at regular intervals by a further 9 planning appeals, the involvement of the National Inspectorate in 3 week-long court hearings, and 6 enforcements.

The history makes clear that no application is ever independent of those that precede it, and this application can only properly be understood in the context of that history.  The owners made clear for example, in their interview with Roseanne Edwards for the Banbury Guardian on the 1st August 2013,  their ambitions of making “further development on the pub’s present car park” (to use their words) their next move.  They have been relentless in their pursuit of this objective ever since.

But they were clear as far back as 2007 that a change of use to residential was the ultimate purpose of the pub’s purchase.  It has been there from the very beginning.  I think it entirely appropriate I quote from a letter I wrote on 15th April 2007 in response to the owners’ first application only months after they had moved in, on this occasion by Jacqueline Noquet **Application No 07/00630/F** proposing ‘a change of use from licenced premises to dwelling’.  I wrote in response:

*I write as one the residents of Burdrop most directly affected by this proposal.  I object most strongly to the cynical manipulation of planning regulation it represents.*

*The Bishop Blaize used to be a highly regarded and well frequented pub, which provided a valued amenity, and enhanced the value of the surrounding property.*

*The applicant has blamed the rundown of the business on a lack of village support and a general lack of support for pub/restaurant facilities in the area.*

*It seems wholly unjustifiable to put forward a case for closure based on the applicant and her husband’s failure to attract custom, and to establish a good reputation in the village.  The pub was previously well supported and provided an entirely viable business…….*

*The present owners made it clear from the very beginning that they had little intention of staying very long, and I have no doubt at all that were they to convert the pub from licensed premises to a dwelling house, it would not be for they themselves to live in but pursued entirely as a speculative venture.*

*As I understand the matter, they have introduced a clause into the terms of sale that would return a percentage of any profit made from the site’s development to themselves.*

*It is this that gives all of us in this part of the village our greatest concern that a successful application would lead to further secondary applications to infill additional housing in the space presently allocated for car parking, and in the grounds on the roadside to the south of the pub.*

*I hope the District Council will not hesitate to turn down this second application.  The village is a thriving community and entirely supportive of its two pubs, run well.*

It shocks me deeply that I could be writing this very same letter now,  almost word for word; and that what I described then as cynical manipulation continues.

My principal concern as a local resident were this application to be approved now nearly 10 years on with all the same arguments and with the original intention once again made abundantly clear, is that it will bring all Council regulation finally into complete disrepute locally and continue to give encouragement to the owners that their ambitions for further speculative building both on the existing site and on the adjoining land – including the ‘withdrawn’ application submitted on their behalf earlier in the 2013 for two new detached houses in the grounds of the pub – can now proceed with little likelihood of any further enforcement action.

Two arguments were put on the District Council’s planning website at the time of the earlier **Planning Application 16/01525/F** by the applicant as further argument in favour of their proposal, having seen the level of local opposition the proposal has evoked, not least from both Parish Councils.  I feel it is even more appropriate now to address both of these again, because the present application puts forward the same arguments again.

They can be summarized in a neatly conceived circular argument:  the owners cannot afford to open the pub as a pub because Mrs. Noquet has another job.  They cannot afford to pay anyone else to staff the pub because they don’t have enough letting income.  In a new variant in this application, it is also now “the absence of support from the two villages that has dictated that (the owners)…cannot afford to pay them”.  The “ future of the pub is therefore at risk” - and now their very livelihoods -  if CDC don’t support their application that will enable them to increase their letting income.

As if it will now be the District Council’s fault, or the villagers’ fault,  that the pub fails – again, just one more appeal step away from Mr.and Mrs. Noquet’s original determination which they have now returned to in 8 previous applications – that they be allowed a ‘change of use’ or a ‘certificate of lawful use existing’ to C3 residential use.

I share the belief of the Sibford Gower Parish Council, expressed clearly in their response to the last application,  that the truth is that the property is not in any case operating as a public house as required by the Court Decision of 29th September 2014.  I can attest to the fact that it is hardly ever open for more than 3 hours a week, and then only for pre-booked ‘Sunday lunches’.  More recently the car-park has remained permanently empty, but for the owners’ own cars.

The appearance more recently of a little sign board placed outside an empty car park advertising chilled wines and bottled beer for a couple of hours at lunchtime Tuesday to Friday only adds farce to the pretence.

As such the applicants have been living in breach of the enforcement order ever since they resumed occupation of the building in 2015 and began restoring it to a private dwelling – which it remains for the greater part of the week.

It is hard in these circumstances to give any credence to the applicant’s concern for the viability of the pub as a business.   I find the applicants’ special pleading and circular arguments entirely specious, and I hope that the Council will see the manipulation now for what is.

While Mr. and Mrs. Noquet remain the landlords, if the pub is at risk it is because they have lost the support of the entire community, as other submissions to the Planning Department have clearly demonstrated.

It is perhaps not surprising.  What the owners think of the villagers of Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris is perfectly evident in the name they chose for the pub in place of the Bishop Blaize.  The childhood playground tongue twister could hardly be more explicit or less welcoming.