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Old Vicarage,
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Herefordshire,
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Andrew Banks,
Principal Planning officer,
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PO Box 230,
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10th June 2012
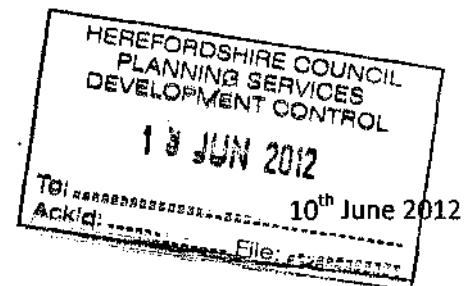
Dear Mr. Banks,

I am writing to offer my strong objection to a planning application (Number: N121379/F) concerning the Royal George, Lyonshall. This is my local pub and therefore I feel very strongly about it. It has had a very tough past few years – going through several landlords, all bringing something different. However each landlord has been limited by Punch as to how much of a change they could make, mostly through the price at which Punch will sell them beer and the lack of freedom given to the tenants. In my view the fact that the Royal George is being run as a tied house is the biggest, if not only, reason Punch are claiming it to be "unfeasible" and were it a free house it would have great potential to do well.

Such a development proposed by the plans would be wholly unsuitable for our village. Many depend on the pub as a centre for meetings, whether social or more formal. The development proposed would drastically reduce the available car parking space. As it is currently it occasionally struggles, as I have witnessed over this past Jubilee weekend when cars were shoehorned in and getting out was a nightmare!

Recently the pub has been doing very well, and even going down on one Thursday night for a meal resulted in having to ask someone to move their car as I was blocked in. How Punch can claim to have left space for twenty cars in their plans is a mystery to me – not to mention the fact you would have to get rid of the recycling facility which is currently in place there. They may well be of a "standard size" but what Punch don't understand is that as a pub in a rural location many farmers will come down in large vehicles. There would most certainly not be space enough for twenty of these as may be the case at certain times during the year when they have their annual meals together. Another major issue with lining cars up as Punch have proposed is that two entrance/exits would have very reduced access in busy periods. This could pose a fairly serious fire risk. On the end of the northern annexe (parking space 15) is the only external door to the kitchens and this would need to be kept clear – however there is a proposed parking space blocking it off. This space is also covering the current gas meter which is on the outside of that wall.

Parking spaces 1, 2, 3 and to an extent 4 are all proposed where there is a very steep embankment, too steep to park as far back as planned, and even with excavation it is directly into someone's garden, therefore cars would block off the entrance/exit. Their plan also does not take into account the fact that people do not want to park their cars very close together in a pub car park where there is the likelihood of children playing (especially with a demolished beer garden) and drivers exiting in the dark increasing the risk of damage caused to vehicles. My best guess as a loyal patron of the George would be space for twelve cars in the proposed space left before people start getting blocked in. This number includes space for the tenants' car(s) and one or two disabled spaces (which have not been factored in by Punch) so possibly only eight or nine spaces for patrons. As it stands currently, it is known that if anyone wishes to stay very late or leave a car over night the back area of the car park is perfect for this and it is accepted we may get blocked in in order to fit more cars in and we leave the front area for families and couples coming for meals who wish to leave slightly earlier. This works very well, but could not happen under the proposed plans.

By reducing the car parking this much it would be seriously questionable if the pub would be able to survive. Another major problem this would bring would be street parking and the chaos which comes with that. The roads

around the pub are renowned for being awkward at the best of times, especially as the pub lies on an essential bus route, and is also on one of the most dog legged bends in the county. People who were wishing to park to go to the pub would line the streets ignoring any double yellow lines – as is the case in Kington at times. We would be left with a serious traffic issue and so would the owners of the new house as their driveway would provide the perfect parking space… eventually I believe people would become so fed up of having to risk leaving their cars in less than favourable places they would stop coming and there would not be enough business to support the future existence of the pub. There may also be complaints about the congestion and poor parking around the pub.

As for the proposed plans to build over the beer garden, they are unacceptable. We would be left with a garden about a third of the size of the current garden. In the past few weeks (when the weather was favourable) both sections of the garden were used for adults to sit in and eat and drink, and for children to play in. Many houses in the village of Lyonshall do not have big gardens attached to them. This space at the back of the pub provides an excellent opportunity for parents to meet and have a drink together while their children socialise and play ball games in the safety of the enclosed garden. Having the large garden means there is space for everyone to be accommodated outside when the weather is good – much like the games room/lounge bar/public bar/dining room set up inside does. There is space for smokers, people who wish to eat and be undisturbed, people who simply wish to drink out in the sun, and for children to play safely and un-disturbed. By cutting down the available space this set up would be impossible.

I also believe this would prevent the future existence of the pub. We would have less people frequenting as they would become fed up of having to be in such close proximity to people they would rather keep distance from. Eventually many would find different pubs to go to and the George would be desolate again.

Since the most recent set of tenants-at-will, there have been at least three live bands playing in the North-easterly wing of the building. The end of this wing is a window which is pointed directly at the proposed house. Depending on who buys the house (which is uncontrollable) there could be many noise complaints, if the George continues to have live music nights (which I hope is the case!)
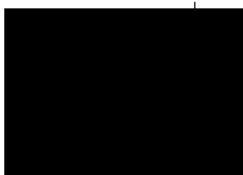
The building proposed by Punch is not in the slightest bit in keeping with the very old, black and white building of the pub. As the pub is a listed building and a landmark in the village it would be a terrible shame to plonk a four-bedroom, flat-pack, box on the flower bed!

I believe I have now outlined why I think that, should this planning permission be allowed to proceed, our village would be left, in the not too distant future, with no pub. This would render us, pretty much, a village without any services. The pub is essential to many local businesses, i.e. B&B's and holiday cottages.

As I understood it, the only way one can "get rid of" the last pub in the village is if a) it is not feasible as a business, or b) it has been on the market for six months with no offers. Neither of these are wholly and fairly true in this case. A) I fully believe that the pub would be a feasible business were it not stuck having to pay the extortionate prices Punch charges and were the tenants given the freedom to do as they pleased with the pub. B) the price that the pub has been on the market for has been a far inflated price as they have been planning this application for a very long time and never wanted offers – simply had to go through the motions and wait their six months. There have also been offers of sensible amounts which punch have refused.

I hope you can understand the points I have made and I would be happy to expand on any of them should you wish to hear more from me. I look forward to you making the right decision for our small community.

Yours sincerely,

Dave Smith (age 19)