

**DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of Dodford with Grafton Planning Committee
held on 13 June 2023 at 7.30pm in Dodford Village Hall, Priory Road**

Present: Cllrs, Rory Lydon (Vice Chairman), Rachel Jennings (Chair), and Jonathan Shapiro

In attendance – Clerk Kay Stone

1. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Scott Fuller and Scottie Sanderson

2. Declarations of interest

- i. None
- ii. None

3. To consider planning application consultations:

23/00511/FUL – The Dodford Inn, Whinfield Road – Change of use to a mixed-use venue and Public House. This is due to Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) receiving additional information regarding the application.

Dodford with Grafton Parish Council (the PC) was pleased to see a response to its comments from the owners of the Dodford Inn, but was disappointed both by its tone, and by the fact that it did not adequately address the concerns raised. We should reiterate that the notion of having a desirable venue for celebrations within the village is a welcome one, as long as it fits into the context of Dodford's unique situation: a tiny village, with infrastructure that barely copes with its small size even now, within a short drive from the conurbations likely to provide the Inn with its customer base.

The Inn seems to have responded to the PC's comments with a series of bland platitudes about rules and regulations, without detailing how these are to be followed. Moreover, the Inn seems to have misunderstood the PC's concerns about the overall numbers in a number of the areas raised.

We are sure that the figure of 140 visitors 'has been exceeded by the number of casual customers', but a constant flow of visitors over a prolonged period of time cannot be compared to the impact of having such numbers arriving in a concerted block, as would be the case before any of the types of parties mentioned by the Inn, only to be repeated at the end of these parties, often late at night. Congestion and the inevitable grid lock of the local lanes would cause massive disruption to local residents several times a week, yet the Inn does not acknowledge this, let alone offer any means of managing it. Parking problems at the Village Hall a few times a year would not excuse systemic chaos throughout the village several times a week.

Similarly, parking cars over a period of hours may easily be managed but having up to 70 cars queuing on Whinfield Road cannot be ignored as a problem both to the Inn itself, and to the residents of the tiny lane with no connection with the Inn apart from its proximity.

That proximity also means that the noise associated with the celebrations will be an issue, to say nothing of its impact on residents further afield as the Brimstone Brook Valley funnels noise far and wide. The Inn mentions wedding services being held 'without amplification', and that 'music will be background to the entrances' but makes no mention of the (much louder) music and other noise inevitably associated with people having a good time.

'Procedures and equipment for noise control' are all very well but offer little reassurance as to how the control will actually be enacted, particularly if temporary buildings are used, whose position may vary, and where the possibilities of sound proofing are minimal.

The PC was also concerned about the absence of comments about fireworks, although it notes that comments have been made about this issue elsewhere. It is gratifying to see that the owners 'share residents' concerns regarding firework displays' but seem to be entirely passive in their response should customers want pyrotechnics at their party. The mitigation mentioned elsewhere is welcomed, but if fireworks are not to be banned completely, they should be limited to infrequent, predictable times to minimise animal owners being forced to remain housebound in a completely involuntary way.

In summary, the PC entirely refutes the suggestion that its comments 'demonstrate their objections' in principle. It acknowledges the enhanced status and position that the Inn has taken within village life but is concerned that its future development should be linked to the wellbeing of the whole village. Decisions made now will last for many years, are likely to outlive the current owners, and so need to be fully 'futureproof'. Until that can be fully demonstrated, the Council must continue to recommend that the application is refused.

4. To consider planning appeal consultations received - None.

5. To note any planning decisions and appeal decisions received

Hartley House, Priory Road – Approval of Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing use or development for the use of land as a domestic garden.

6. Enforcement/Environmental issues

- i. Paul Murphy on leave until 19 June and so the Clerk is awaiting a response from BDC to explain the difference in the law as the Parish Council understood that solar panels were not allowed on the roadside in a Conservation Area. Also awaiting a response as to whether tarmacked drives need planning permission.
- ii. Residential use of outbuilding at Wandilla – case closed – there has been no breach of planning requirements following a visit by BDC
- iii. At the April full parish council meeting the clerk was asked to look for any relandscaping in the approval for Westlea due to damage to the side of Woodland Road. The application at the time did not mention relandscaping and as such this is not in the approval document.

7. Any other planning issues

None

The meeting closed at 8.06pm

Signed..... Chair