

DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of Dodford with Grafton Planning Committee held on 30 June 2023 at 7.30pm in Dodford Church, Priory Road

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

In attendance – Clerk Kay Stone

1. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Lynne Griffin and Jenni Schuett

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 prior to the District Council Planning Committee Meeting to be held on 3 July 2023.

1 The Parish Council stands by its previous comments and is disappointed and concerned that the potential disruption in terms of noise, fireworks, and traffic that would be caused to residents of Dodford, seems to have been completely discounted.

2 The applicants have not offered any real assurance that noise from their events will be mitigated by restricting music to the main building; the Parish Council has concrete evidence that even at the current level of activity, the entertainment provided is often offered outside the building, and at disruptively high sound levels. How this would translate to late night events for more than three times the number of visitors can only be imagined, particularly if the use of structures such as marquees (where sound proofing is impossible) is permitted.

3 No cognisance seems to have been made of the detrimental effects of fireworks, especially on pets and livestock. Dodford is a rural village with both farms and stables, where fireworks can only cause harm and distress. To the potential harm from the noise should be added the physical harm that can be caused by the debris created when fireworks crash into fields containing livestock. We note that even Bromsgrove District Council has moved away from fireworks in its celebrations to more acceptable electronic light shows and would urge a total ban on fireworks at the Dodford Inn.

4 The Parish Council remain concerned that the premises license at the Dodford Inn was granted in November 2005 and does not seem to have been reviewed since. As such, it does not even take into account the extensive building work carried out at the Inn in 2015, let alone the proposed changes in use. Worcestershire Regulatory Services has apparently not investigated, renewed or enforced the premises license since then, and that a license granted nearly twenty years ago remains in place for a pub that has totally changed its character since then, seems surprising. Not reviewing it now, when the proposed business is hoping to change significantly yet again, would seem to be legally dubious.

5 The Parish Council gathers that the Dodford Inn's music license is incorporated within its premises license, so the comments made above apply to this too, all the more so given the increase in the levels of sound likely to occur at weddings and similar events.

6 The Parish Council notes that the Dodford Inn's original application form for the change of use omitted any statement about noise management. This is but one example of the Inn's history of disregarding regulations, and the Parish Council is concerned that any future regulations may be similarly ignored. Other examples include the fact that the barbecue and pizza areas were both built without permission, and that permission for extra

parking on the field was never granted as the applicant withdrew the application. Most significantly (as cited in para 2 above), even at this time of trying to get a change of use granted, the applicants can be shown to be continuing to flout the noise regulations by playing loud music in the open air, when the existing permission, as stated in the planners' own document (27 June 2023) is clear that 'live music can only be played indoors are limited (sic) to a 3-piece band finishing half an hour before closing time'. The evidence showing this (Instagram video, and resident's formal measurement of noise pollution) is available if required.

7 The significant traffic issues that would inevitably occur when 50 or more vehicles attempt to navigate the narrow, single-track lanes all at the same time would present significant risk to children, walkers, cyclists, and horses. This would be made worse by the fact that the venue is hidden, making navigation to reach it all the more difficult, and traffic mayhem all the more likely.

8 In summary, while the Parish Council notes the planners' observations that the application does not breach any formal planning laws and regulations, it would respond on two counts:

First, many of these laws and regulations have been inadequately applied and enforced over the past two decades, and so are inappropriate markers by which to measure the Inn's activities.

Second, there is more to planning than the application of rules and regulations; the 'real life' context of each application should also be considered (fireworks in an urban park are not the same as those over rural fields populated by vulnerable livestock, for example). The Parish Council relies on the elected members to review planning applications through a human lens, and not merely a legalistic one.

Thus, the Parish Council continues to object to the application, but hopes that if the Council is minded to issue an approval, it ensures that the appropriate, and enforceable constraints are put in place to ensure that life in Dodford is not adversely affected by the Inn's profit motive.

4. To consider planning appeal consultations received - None.

5. To note any planning decisions and appeal decisions received - None

6. Enforcement/Environmental issues

No updates since the planning committee meeting on 13 June 2023.

7. Any other planning issues

None

The meeting closed at 8.49pm

Signed..... Chair