

WERRINGTON Neighbourhood Council

..... OVER 40 YEARS SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF WERRINGTON

PLANNING GROUP MEETIN HELD ON MONDAY 26th MARCH 2018 AT WERRINGTON COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTRE

NOTES OF THE MEETING (Item 1)

These notes are in draft form only and have not been accepted as a true record

	<p>PRESENT: Planning Committee: Martin Greaves, Kay Molyneux, Officers: Vince Moon, Geoff Smith, Sally Weald, Bill Mercer Other WNC members: Ivan Hammond]</p> <p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE : Cllr John Fox, Cllr Judy Fox, Cllr Steve Lane MEETING OPENED: 7.05pm</p>
	<p>In the absence of a Planning Group Chair Vince Moon welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to the extra called meeting of the Planning Group. These notes relate to Item 1: Reconsideration of the Licensing Application to sell alcohol at The Werrington Green Post Office.</p>
1.	<p>1.1 Overview</p> <p>At the Werrington Neighbourhood Council meeting on 13th March, the above application to sell alcohol was considered. Prior to the meeting members had already circulated details and responded by email. Concerns had been noted about parking and disturbance on The Green but it was agreed that appropriate parking restrictions and public nuisance legislation was in place so it would be a matter for authorities to enforce if there was a problem and if necessary the license could be removed. General support was also noted on Facebook. At the meeting members further considered the application. It considered that for the Post Office to be feasible then the shop would have to be developed and the selling of alcohol would enhance the facilities of the shop. It was, therefore, agreed that there was no reason for the Neighbourhood Council to oppose the licensing application.</p> <p>A petition containing local resident's signatures was subsequently received by WNC from Ian Toates via Roger Proudfoot. Mr Toates asked for WNC support for the petition and suggested that the WNC could further object. The WNC planning committee agreed to meet again to look at the points made and to reconsider the decision made.</p> <p>Mr Toates had forwarded the email to the Parish Council. It should be pointed out to him that Werrington doesn't have a Parish Council. The Neighbourhood Council is therefore not a statutory consultee and does not receive notice of alcohol licence applications. The Neighbourhood Council can only make comments as a community group through the consultation process offered to the general public.</p> <p>1.2 General Community Response</p> <p>The petition covers over 100 local residents including people known to the Neighbourhood Council. Some are quite a distance away such as Lewes Gardens and Edinburgh Avenue. Other than this no other concerns have been received by the Neighbourhood Council. Additional wide support has</p>

	<p>noted on Facebook although parking concerns were raised again. It is noted that the consideration must centre on the licence to sell alcohol and not the provision of the Post Office and shop (both businesses are already in existence)</p> <p>The WNC has noted that Werrington Village needs a Post Office especially for the elderly. This new Post Office is offering enhanced hours but will need an attached convenience store to make it viable (and vice versa). The size of the premises will limit the size of the store (and its alcohol offering) and its potential number of customers. The proprietors are well known, experienced shop keepers and respected. The village conservation area has thriving businesses (including the pub next door and at least two other establishments selling alcohol). This licensing provision will not affect the appearance of the post office nor conservation area. Whilst it is noted that there is space for expansion, this is not part of this decision.</p>	
	1.3 Response to Petition Points	
	Petition	WNC response
	<p>1. Prevention of crime and disorder. Local residents believe that sale of alcohol from the Post Office until late at night will encourage and increase vulnerability to crime.</p> <p>a. A significant number of crimes committed are alcohol related or induced. By increasing the number of places where alcohol is freely on sale within a small community area is likely to increase the number of such incidents</p>	<p>i) This is a small convenience store therefore will not be offering 'cheap booze' nor able to compete with the likes of Lidl, Co-op and Tesco. Range and sales will be modest and will not form a key part of the business. As helpfully detailed by the petition, alcohol is readily available at most other local shops open longer hours and, in the case of supermarkets, cheaper. Why should this shop not sell alcohol when every other shop does. In fact the village has recently lost a 'shop' selling alcohol with the newsagent becoming a cafe. This license will not increase the sale of alcohol in the area; people will just shop elsewhere especially with a pub next door.</p>
	<p>b. During the last 30 years the post office has been burgled several times, occasionally by armed raiders at times when the shop has been open. Sale of alcohol until 10pm will increase risk and vulnerability to violent crime including exposure of neighbouring residents to danger.</p>	<p>ii) Previous burglaries have no bearing on the sale of alcohol at the premises. There is no evidence to suggest that they were alcohol related. What evidence is there to suggest that shops selling alcohol are more susceptible to violent crime. The PO will mean that there is increased security for the shop both during opening and closing hours with CCTV, grilles etc. Their insurance will require the extra security. In any case the pub next door offers cheaper alcohol until later in the evening.</p>
	<p>c. Trespass - Chapel Lane is a private road and totally unsuitable for even short term parking or waiting. When the Bluebell public house (next door) and the Cherry House restaurant (across the street) are open, available street parking is usually taken up. Therefore customers will park in Chapel Lane trespassing and blocking access (including for emergency situations and emergency vehicles). The lane is very narrow. During daytime hours when the post office is open there are instances now when people do park, flaunting the presence of Double Yellow Lines and prevention / access signs. Offenders obstruct proper access for Chapel Lane residents. Therefore a major issue can be foreseen if the Post Office is permitted to stay open into evening time</p>	<p>iii) There are already parking restrictions in the area. Therefore this is an enforcement matter. The proprietors of the Post Office and shop cannot be made accountable to 'control and deter trespass and obstructions' as this is a matter for the enforcement agencies. This refers to the parking of the customers of the already existing shop and Post Office but this consideration can only relate to the additional sale of alcohol. Alcohol on its own is going to make little difference to the numbers of customers arriving by car as they will travel to shops offering cheaper options. Alcohol sales will not make this a 'shopping destination' attracting customers from a wide distance. If parking is a problem and is properly enforced then people will just drive onto Goodmans and Jet garage (going west) and Tesco and Nisa (going east and south)</p>

	when the parking on The Green and Church Street is taken by customers to the Bluebell and Cherry house. We cannot see that the new owners will control and deter the trespass and obstruction that will occur because it will be against their interests.	
2. Public safety a. A significant number of elderly people reside close by the Green in Werrington and they will be continually intimidated and disturbed by the shop nearby being open until 10pm for sale of alcohol. See 3d below.		iv) There is already a pub next door to shop opening later into the night. The licence application states opening hours of 8am to 10pm, although the proprietors have said that they only intend to open until 8pm (the 10pm is only going to be used for special opening). There is not going to be additional high numbers of customers arriving just for the purchase of alcohol (see also point i)
b. The junction of Chapel Lane suffers from a severe lack of visibility splay making it difficult to exit the junction safely when cars are parked directly outside the post office. This problem will be alleviated to some extent if the 20mph zone applied for is created. However the issue will be exasperated even further if it is not. This is because there will be virtually 100% chance of vision being obscured by parked vehicles from early daytime to 10pml. We do not see that the new owner will be able to, or even attempt, daytime to 10pml. We do not see that the new owner will be able to, or even attempt, to control this.		v) The lack of visibility has nothing to do with the sale of alcohol and the consideration of the licence. There is already an existing Post Office and shop. Cars parked outside the Post Office are parked legally. Even so, the sale of alcohol alone is not going to affect the numbers of cars parked in the first space outside the Post Office. Regulations are already on place and so this is an enforcement issue. The owner is not responsible for controlling cars parked outside, either legally or illegally.
3. Prevention of public nuisance. a. It is not unusual for disturbances and brawls to occur near to where alcohol can be purchased for consumption <i>off</i> premises. b. In recent years the police have been called to deal with disturbances near to the Bluebell where young people have congregated drinking alcohol outside the pub in the car park, pub garden, on the Green or on street. The risk of this happening more is highly likely to materialise if the premises license application is granted for the post office to stay open until 10pm for sale of alcohol. c. I have personally witnessed groups of young people, in an inebriated state, purposefully breaking numerous glass wine, 'alcopop' and beer bottles within The Green area, on the Fulbridge Road carriageway, and within the Cuckoos Hollow Park area. In many cases the young perpetrators all looked to be well under 18. d. Residents of Church Street and the Green have also complained to me that they already suffer with people discarding empty alcohol and soft drink bottles, tins and cartons in their front gardens. This is likely to happen even more with another outlet along Church Street and the Green selling alcohol for consumption off premises.		vi) The sale of alcohol at the Post Office is unlikely to increase the number of brawls on The Green (especially with a pub next door). Young people are hardly going to buy more expensive alcohol when there are many cheaper sources nearby. There are no known incidences of disturbances outside for instance Hodgson or Goodman. Alcohol sales are legislated for. To keep their licence proprietors need to ensure that they do not sell to under age people and that alcohol is not brought for underage drinkers. 'Challenge 25' is a widely adopted policy. Proprietor will need to keep residents and Council happy in order to retain their licence. If there is any trouble on The Green or evidence of underage sales, there is an option for removal of licence (even before renewal date). Shops are regularly checked to ensure that underage legislation is adhered to. Under age drinkers are not going to be sitting out on the Green in full view of the proprietor and the Village. They will be going to the supermarkets up the road for the cheaper alcohol and less visible places to drink it. If there is already evidence of litter being discarded, then the sale of alcohol at the Post Office cannot be blamed for it. There were no problems when the Newsagent sold alcohol.

	<p>4. Protection of children from harm.</p> <p>a. Since the Ken Stimpson Secondary School opened during the 1980's the post office has been a popular shop for young people to call at after school each day to buy sweets, drinks etc. Numbers of students allowed in the shop had to be limited by the previous owner attempting to prevent pilfering when it was found there were stock losses.</p>	<p>vii) This has nothing to do with the sale of alcohol and the consideration of the license</p>
	<p>b. If alcohol is permitted to be on sale it will be targeted as a 'top prize' for young pilferers wanting to keep to the 'peer pressure' exerted on them. This will put young people under 18 at risk of being able to obtain alcohol easily. It is unlikely that the new owners of such a small convenience shop will have suitable security systems in place, certainly not systems of the calibre employed by the likes of Tesco and other shops with premises licenses. This will expose irresponsible and vulnerable young people to temptation and risk. In any community where there are many young people who need to walk or cycle everywhere absent of parental carers/ chaperones, those young people rely on local convenience stores. If a Premises License is granted for the Werrington Post Office the number of stores selling alcohol within easy walking distance will increase to too many. Many vulnerable young people obtain alcohol from small independent convenience stores by persuading older people over 18 to purchase it for them for a fee. This does go on and is difficult to counter even if the shopkeeper tries to do so. Therefore it provides even more persuasion for there to be a lesser number of premises where alcohol can be bought within young peoples' own community areas. Within close proximity, under one to two miles of Werrington Green, there are plenty other premises which are licensed to sell alcohol for consumption <i>off</i> premises.</p>	<p>viii) Alcohol in a small store like this is often behind or close to the till and in any case will be protected by security systems especially as this is a Post Office. This is not an issue for provision of an alcohol licence. As has been shown by the petition alcohol is freely available from shops throughout the community so the small amount being offered by this 'small convenience store' is hardly making much of an impact on the vulnerability of the youth of Werrington. See also comment vi)</p>
	<p>1.4 Conclusion: The Planning Committee reconsidered every point in detail with the main points made detailed above. The village needs the Post Office. For this to be viable it will need the attached Convenience Store and for that to be viable alcohol needs to be sold. For the business to be successful there will be additional cars but the parking is regulated. There is unlikely to have much impact on the immediate neighbours; in any case there is already a business being run from the premises and a pub next door. The sale of alcohol on its own (and the subject of these considerations) is unlikely to increase the number of vehicles. Alcohol is sold next door at the pub and elsewhere in the village. Whilst a more successful shop may encourage extra people to sit on The Green, any anti-social behaviour is covered by legislation. If there are any ongoing problems related to alcohol then the license can be revoked. Therefore, having considered all the elements, the Neighbourhood Council cannot raise any viable objections to the sale of alcohol. It cannot offer support to the resident's petition and will not be making its own objections.</p>	

