



Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 18 September 2012

Site visit made on 18 September 2012

by Ian Radcliffe BSC (Hons) MCIEH DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 1 November 2012

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/A/12/2174210

292 Mill Road, Cambridge CB1 3NL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Bennell Developments Limited against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref 11/0872/FUL, dated 18 July 2011, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2011.
 - The development proposed is residential development - the erection of 5 houses and conversion / extension to provide student accommodation (16 units).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are;
 - whether the proposal would result in the loss of a local facility important in sustaining the social life of the community; and if it would, whether such a facility would be viable to operate;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - the effect of the proposal on local services and facilities.

Reasons

Principle of development and use of the building

3. The appeal site is occupied by a purpose built Victorian public house called 'The Royal Standard' closed in 2007. Utilising permitted development rights it reopened the same year as a restaurant (use class A3) before last year changing use once more to operate as a charity shop (use class A1).
4. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the government's National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The proposed development is located within a residential area close to the centre of Cambridge and would result in the redevelopment of the site for housing. As a result it is not a matter in dispute that it is a sustainable location for development. Policies 3/1 and 5/2 of the Cambridge Local Plan support the conversion of non residential buildings into self contained dwellings in order to make efficient use of land and assist in meeting the housing targets for the city.

5. However, paragraph 70 of the Framework also advises that planning decisions should enhance the sustainability of communities by planning positively for community facilities, such as public houses, and guard against their unnecessary loss. Policy 5/11 of the Cambridge Local Plan, which seeks to prevent the loss of community facilities, fails to identify public houses as such a facility. The Local Plan is therefore in conflict with the Framework. However, as the Framework is an important material consideration and a more recent publication than the Local Plan I attach significant weight to it and I shall treat public houses as a community facility. The question therefore is whether the premises which has not operated as a public house for 5 years is such a facility. It is to that matter which I now turn.
6. In response to the loss of public houses and the silence of the Local Plan on this matter the Council has prepared an Interim Planning Policy Guidance on the Protection of Public Houses in the City of Cambridge (IPPG). Public consultation has closed on this document and subject to minor amendments it is due to be adopted by the Council in October this year. Whilst not part of the development plan it is a practical document which provides a useful approach to assessing applications for a change of use of public houses and I attach moderate weight to it.
7. The IPPG recognises that the use of public houses can be changed to other Class A uses without the need to apply for planning permission. As a consequence, it applies the same development management principles to assess applications for a change of use of such premises to housing as it applies to public houses which are currently in use as drinking establishments. I concur with the findings of another Inspector in appeal reference APP/W0530/A/11/2167619. He found in the absence of such guidance in another local planning authority area that to adopt the approach that a public house use of a site has been lost if it was no longer in use as a drinking establishment would be to take a view that is too narrow and simplistic. For these reasons, I therefore find that the appeal premises is a community facility.
8. The liquor licence for the premises lapsed this year. Whilst planning permission may be readily gained for use as a drinking establishment (class A4 use) the Council's licensing policy has a presumption against issuing new licences on Mill Road. The appellant argues that as a result it is unlikely that the building could re-open as a public house. However, each application would be assessed by the Council on its merits. Given the long history of use of the building as a public house, and that well run public houses do not add to anti-social behaviour or crime, the risk that the premises may not gain a liquor licence is not a matter of such significance as to mean that the building could not reopen as a drinking establishment.

Value of the facility to the local community

9. The premises are located in an urban part of the city that is characterised by terraced housing. Redevelopment of nearby sites such as the former school to the west with terraced housing and flats has increased the amount of housing in the area in recent years. As a result of the high density of development there are a comparatively high number of people living in the area.
10. For a facility to be of value to a local community it needs to be within reasonable walking distance. The Cambridge Pub Study commissioned by the Council has used a distance of 400m to assess accessibility. The appellant

believes that a distance of up to 800m would be more suitable measure. In order to cater for the mobility of all sections of the community I believe that a distance closer to 400m is more appropriate. On this basis there are 2 alternative public houses towards the edge of Romsey within a reasonable walking distance of the appeal site. The first, 'The Brook', is a sports orientated public house. The second, 'The Empress', is aimed at young people. As a consequence, both are niche drinking establishments that do not aim to serve the wider local community. The Royal Standard in contrast has gardens and is centrally located in Romsey. As a result, it is within easy walking distance for all residents of this local community and has the potential to cater for a broader market than the other 2 public houses.

11. A petition with 455 signatures was submitted to the hearing seeking the retention of the building and its gardens for use as a public house or another community use. This supports the contention that the Royal Standard is a facility that is valued by the local community. Whilst the loss of the Royal Standard would not reduce the local community's ability to meet its day to day needs I therefore find that it would result in the loss of a facility that is of value to it.

Viability

12. The Royal Standard was a local facility of service to the community for over 125 years until it ceased trading as a public house 5 years ago. When the public house was trading it was tenanted. The appellant stated that the landlord of the public house was unable to operate the business at a profit. This supports the view that whilst it has been a valued local facility it struggled in the years prior to its closure as a public house.
13. Several local residents stated that the public house was poorly managed in its latter years. Furthermore, landlords of tenanted public houses, unlike freehold landlords, are restricted in terms of the beers that can be sold and have less incentive to invest in a building they do not own. These considerations may well have affected the attractiveness and thus popularity of this community facility.
14. In my assessment, based upon the policies of the Framework, in order to discover whether a change of use of the building is justified it should therefore first be marketed as a public house in accordance with sensible criteria such as those contained within the IPPG. This approach would also be consistent with how applications for changes of use in relation to other local community facilities are dealt with under policy 5/11 of the Local Plan. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the objectives of the Framework and the general thrust of policy 5/11 of the Local Plan.

Character and appearance

15. The appeal site lies within the Mill Road Area of the Central Conservation area. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies that Romsey town along the side streets off Mill Road is characterised by narrow 2 storey terraced housing set on the back edge of the pavement. This has resulted in a fine grain of urban development. Buildings of Local Interest, which policy 4/12 of the Local Plan seeks to protect, include the Royal Standard. These buildings are predominantly located along Mill Road the main thoroughfare through the area.
16. The proposed side and rear extensions to the Royal Standard would be subservient in height to the building and would not unduly obscure its

chimneys from public view. In terms of design the inclusion of a gable in the front of the side extension would complement the main elevation of the building. In addition, the pitch of the mansard roofs would match that of the existing building. I recognise that the vast majority of the side garden would be occupied by the side extension, but it is a feature of this urban part of the Conservation Area that the full width of sites, including corner plots, are usually occupied by buildings. The proposal therefore would not adversely affect this Building of Local Interest. The rear garden and car park are present in glimpsed views from Mill Road and do not in my view make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

17. The proposed terrace would be set close to the back edge of the pavement on Malta Road and in terms of height, width and architectural features would complement the existing terrace. Conditions requiring the provision of a replacement tree to the side of the Royal Standard, the value of which is identified by the Character Appraisal, and the use of appropriate materials would assist in ensuring that the appearance of the development complements the locality.
18. Taking all these matters into account, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would preserve the contribution of the appeal site to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In doing so the proposal would comply with policy ENV/7 of the East of England Plan and policies 3/10, 3/12, 4/11 and 4/12 of the Cambridge Local Plan. These policies require the protection of the character and appearance of a locality, including conservation areas, through high quality design that respects local design features.

Other matters

Local services and facilities

19. Policy 5/14 of the Local Plan provides the policy basis for contributions towards the provision of open space, community development, waste, waste management and education. The contents of the obligation are uncontested and a properly completed section 106 agreement was submitted to the Council to secure such provision prior to the hearing. However, as the proposed development is unacceptable for other reasons it is not necessary to assess the contributions sought in relation to the tests in paragraph 204 of the Framework, or the requirements of Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

Split decision

20. Should it be deemed appropriate a split decision was suggested by the appellant allowing the appeal in relation to the proposed terrace, but dismissing it in relation to the conversion of the Royal Standard. Whilst these 2 aspects of the scheme are physically and functionally separate such a decision would result in the communal outdoor area of the Royal Standard wrapping around the side and rear of the back garden of the nearest of the proposed terraced houses. As this would be the sole private amenity space to this house if the Royal Standard once more was used as a community facility this has the potential to result in unacceptable noise and disturbance for future occupiers. Furthermore, a public house with a car park and outdoor amenity space is a far more attractive proposition than a public house without these facilities. In the interests of maximising the opportunity for the facility to return to community

use and safeguarding the living conditions of the occupiers of the end terrace a split decision therefore would not be appropriate in this instance.

Conclusion

21. While the site is in a sustainable location and the proposal would make an efficient, well designed use of the site to provide additional housing (including for students), I consider that any presumption in favour of development is clearly outweighed by the comprehensive harm the proposal would cause by virtue of the loss of a valued community facility. For these reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Ian Radcliffe

Inspector

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Mr Kratz
BA(Hons) solicitor LARTPI

Birketts LLP

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Mr Evans
Planning Officer

Cambridge City Council

Mr Waller
Senior Planning Policy Officer

Cambridge City Council

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Mr Bell	Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Mr Cook	Cambridge & District Campaign for Real Ale
Mr Boucher	local resident
Mr O'Malley	local resident
Miss Walker	local resident
Miss Jeffery	local resident
Mr Bourke	County Councillor

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE HEARING

- 1 Letter of notification detailing the time, date and location of the hearing together with a list of persons notified.
- 2 Petition supporting retention of the public house.
- 3 Cambridge City Council Statement of Licensing Policy.
- 4 Report on the key issues arising from Public Consultation on the IPPG on The Protection of Public Houses in the City of Cambridge, dated 11 September 2012.
- 5 Mill Road Area Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 6 Completed Section 106 agreement.
- 7 Planning Officer report at the Planning Committee on 22 August 2012 on the residential redevelopment of 169 – 173 High Street Application No 12/0705/FUL .
- 8 E-mails from the County Council regarding contributions sought towards education.

PLANS SUBMITTED AT THE HEARING

- A Plan showing the location of local section 106 projects in the vicinity of the appeal site.



Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 11 April 2012

Site visit made on 11 April 2012

by L Rodgers BEng (Hons) CEng MICE MBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 16 May 2012

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/A/11/2167619

The Plough, High Street, Shepreth, Royston SG8 6PP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by MPM Properties (Royston) Ltd against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/0828/11, dated 15 April 2011, was refused by notice dated 6 September 2011.
 - The development proposed is described as a change of use from a restaurant (Use Class A3) to a residential dwelling (Use Class C3) together with landscape works to the site frontage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposed development on the provision of community services and facilities in the area.

Procedural matters

3. At the hearing the Appellant submitted a true copy of a Planning Obligation made pursuant to s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This is a material consideration that I shall take into account in my determination.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on the 27 March 2012. This was after submission of the appeal but before the hearing - at which the parties were given the opportunity to comment as to its effect on their cases. In determining the appeal I have had regard to the comments made at the hearing as well as to the NPPF itself.

Reasons

Background

5. The Plough is a detached, brick building with a large garden and extensive parking. It is centrally situated within the village of Shepreth and the building itself lies within the Shepreth Conservation Area. The Plough has historically been used as a public house (Use Class A4) and more recently as a bar/restaurant (use Class A3). However, the property is currently not in use as a restaurant and the proposal seeks to convert the premises into a single residential dwelling.

6. Policy SF/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007 (DPD) aims to protect village services and facilities where their loss would cause an unacceptable reduction in the level of community or service provision in the locality. Village services are said to include shops, post offices, community meeting places and village pubs - although the list is clearly not exhaustive.
7. The policy requires a number of matters to be considered in determining the significance of any loss including the established use, its existing and potential contribution to the social amenity of the local population, the presence of other village services and facilities and the future economic viability of the use including, where appropriate, financial and marketing information.

The established use of the premises

8. Although The Plough had been used as a public house it was converted into a restaurant and bar immediately following its purchase by October Restaurants in 2004; photographs submitted by the Appellant show that substantial changes were made to both the internal layout and decor.
9. The Council accepts that the established use is that of a restaurant in Use Class A3 and confirmed at the hearing that planning permission would be required to revert to an A4 pub use. Whilst local residents state that they were able to use the bar without dining in the restaurant, a matter not disputed by the Appellant, the physical changes shown in the photographs and my observations on site strongly suggest that the bar use was ancillary to that of the restaurant.
10. The bar/restaurant use ceased on the 25 December 2010 and, according to the Appellant, The Plough went into liquidation on the 10 February 2011. Since that time the liquidators have removed the restaurant's fixtures and fittings - including the kitchen equipment. It is therefore abundantly clear that the premises have not been used as a restaurant for more than a year and, notwithstanding that the bar could be used independently of the restaurant, the premises have not functioned in the manner normally expected of a public house for something in excess of seven years.
11. The Appellant points out that the lawful use of the premises is as a restaurant (Use Class A3) and moreover that, when in business, The Plough was regarded as a 'high end' restaurant. The Appellant further argues that such premises have a large catchment area and are unlikely to survive solely on custom from the local populace. As such, The Plough should not be regarded as a village service or facility to be considered under Policy SF/1. Indeed, the Appellant suggests that The Plough should be regarded as a facility within a village rather than a village facility.
12. I have some sympathy with the Appellant's view and it is highly unlikely that The Plough, as a 'high end' restaurant (local residents confirming that prices reflected this description), functioned as a social hub for the village in the way that might normally be expected of a traditional pub.
13. Nevertheless, looking solely at the last use of the premises seems to me to be taking a view which is rather too narrow and simplistic. Indeed, as a number of residents pointed out, if the last use was taken as the sole determinative criterion, changing a pub to Use Class to A3 through permitted development would be a way of circumventing policy restrictions seeking to prevent the loss

of pubs as community facilities. Policy SF/1 itself notes that in addition to considering the established use of the premises, regard must also be had to its potential contribution to the social amenity of the local population.

14. Given that The Plough was once a pub, and notwithstanding the need for planning permission and the appropriate investment, there must at least be the potential for The Plough to be returned to that use. I shall therefore move on to consider the other matters identified in Policy SF/1.

Village services and facilities

15. Policy SF/1 notes that consideration will be given to the presence of other village services which provide an alternative with convenient access by good local public transport services, or by cycling or walking. Although Shepreth does have a number of other services and facilities these are clearly limited. The recently opened coffee shop and the local community hall provide some sort of community focus, but the only facility which can be regarded as providing a realistic alternative to the potential use of The Plough as a public house is the 'Green Man' pub.
16. The Green Man is described as being in the Parish of Shepreth. However, I saw on my visit that it is a considerable distance from the village centre (around 1.6km). It also lies on the opposite side of the A10 from the village centre, the A10 being described by the Council as a 'busy and fast trunk road' - a description with which I concur. Having regard to its location and its public transport links, I am of the view that the Green Man is unlikely to appeal to villagers, other than perhaps those prepared to travel by car. As such its location would act against it becoming a social hub for the village and in my view it would not provide a comparable alternative to a pub sited in the village centre.
17. Shepreth is described in the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (CS) as an 'Infill Village' and the Council notes that "Infill villages are amongst the smallest in South Cambridgeshire, have a poor range of services and facilities and it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside of the village for their daily needs". As such it seems to me that the loss of a potential facility would be acutely felt.

Viability

18. The Appellant has submitted information to show that the former restaurant business operating from The Plough did not prove to be viable, a matter underlined by the fact that the business closed and went into liquidation. The Appellant has also put forward a letter sent to the liquidator of October Restaurants Ltd by the Royal Bank of Scotland Plc's debt recovery department in which it is stated that re-opening of the pub in the current economic climate would not be supported as it is not seen as being financially viable.
19. In contrast, the Council has made submissions suggesting that the site is viable in its current land use. In the Council's view The Plough is capable not only of sustaining a level of net profit adequate to provide an owner operator with appropriate remuneration, but also to fund loan interest and capital repayments for site purchase and essential investment.
20. The Council's assessment is based on a number of assumptions and as such must be subject to some risk. Although some of the factors underlying the

Council's assessment are reasonably easy to account for, such as the condition of the building, matters such as the historic trading record as a pub/restaurant are less reliable as predictors of future performance – particularly taking into account the fact that the premises have not traded as a pub for some time and the changes that have since occurred to the economic climate.

21. Nevertheless, the Appellant accepted at the hearing that despite the failure of the former business it ought to be possible to run some sort of viable pub/restaurant business from the premises. The Plough is reasonably well located and with its garden and car park has appropriate facilities. Despite the need to re-equip the kitchens I see no reason to demur from the view that a viable business could be created.

Marketing

22. The premises were first put onto the market as a restaurant and bar in May 2007 by Christie & Co. The initial asking price was for 'offers in excess of' £675k freehold and during the course of 2007 the premises were marketed through listing on the agent's web site as well as through the circulation of sales particulars and a campaign in the trade press. In November 2008 the asking price was reduced to £590k.
23. A letter from the agents in February 2011 stated that since 2007 the property had been fully exposed to the open market by inclusion on their website and in regular e-mail and mail shots to their database of potential buyers. They also confirmed that the ".....quoted asking price remains £590k freehold".
24. During 4 years of marketing, only three formal offers were received. The first, accepted in October 2007, was for the then asking price of £675k - although the prospective purchaser subsequently pulled out. Following the price reduction in 2008, two further offers were received. One, at £500k, was rejected as being too low as it was insufficient to clear the mortgage on the property but in May 2009 an offer of £570k was accepted – although, again, the prospective purchaser later pulled out.
25. Local residents representing the 'Shepreth Ploughshare' state that it appears as though The Plough was removed from sale in February 2011. The Council also points out that the property was no longer being advertised on Christie & Co's website at the time of its determination and the Appellant confirmed at the hearing that there had been no marketing by Christie & Co in the last year. I understand that this was because the property had been sold to the Appellant 'subject to contract' – the arrangements including an obligation on the Appellant to pursue residential development on the site.
26. Policy SF/1 requires that consideration be given to the results of any efforts to market the premises for a minimum of 12 months at a realistic price. In the Council's view the initial asking price was somewhat ambitious and is likely to have discouraged serious applicants. Whilst the subsequent reduction to £590k was considered a reasonable course of action at the time, the Council nevertheless still considered the asking price to be ambitious – although not so ambitious that it would necessarily discourage interested parties. However, the Council also considers it surprising that no further reductions were made in light of the subsequent economic decline, suggesting that a reasonable expectation of price in 2010 would have been closer to £400k.

27. The Appellant's stance is that the prices sought were realistic given that several formal offers were received. It is also suggested that the basis on which the Council had assessed what it considered a reasonable price expectation was highly dependent on a national average multiple of Fair Maintainable Trade – the Appellant suggesting that regional differences were highly significant and that using the figure for East Anglia would produce a price which would not be far out of line with that being sought.
28. Given that some offers were received for The Plough, it seems that at certain stages of its marketing the asking price was seen by some potential purchasers as being reasonable. However, none of the three offers received proceeded to sale and one was considerably below the then asking price. In my view, the fact that some 4 years of marketing only resulted in two offers close to the asking price must at least raise questions as to whether the property and its asking price were appropriately matched.
29. Indeed, despite a number of viewings since July 2009 no further formal offers were received. Whilst I accept the Appellant's point that the asking price should be reflective of local conditions and that the Council's suggested price of £400k may be too low, bearing in mind the economic climate and the lack of any offers, a further reduction in price between November 2008 and February 2011 might have been expected. The fact that a lower price might not be sufficient to clear the vendor's mortgage commitments may mean that he is unwilling to offer the property for sale at that price - but it does not mean that such lower price is unrealistic in the context of the market.
30. Whilst I am therefore content that the property has been offered to the market for a period well in excess of the minimum 12 months sought by Policy SF/1, I am less convinced that the offer price was realistic throughout that period. In my view the marketing of the property cannot be without some criticism and there is at least limited conflict with Policy SF/1.

Conservation Area

31. The Plough lies within the Shepreth Conservation Area and the statutory test requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
32. In physical terms the effect of the proposed development would, through landscaping of the existing frontage, enhance the appearance of the area. In respect of its character, the Council notes that "Arguably however, the loss of a village facility would affect the social character of this part of the Conservation Area and this would be to the detriment of the area".
33. However, as noted earlier it is debateable as to whether a restaurant provides a village facility. The surrounding development is described by the Council as being predominantly residential of a mix of age and form and in these circumstances it is my view that a change of use from a restaurant to a residential dwelling would, in overall terms, have a neutral effect on the character of the area. I therefore find no conflict with the statutory test.

Other matters

34. In addition to the letters from local residents objecting to the application and the appeal, as well as the accompanying petition, it was made clear at the hearing that there is considerable local opposition to the proposal. Indeed, I

note that a number of local residents have formed a group known as 'Shepreth Ploughshare' with the intention of returning The Plough to community use - specifically as a community-owned public house.

35. However, the 'Shepreth Ploughshare' does not appear to have passed much beyond its formative stages nor does it appear to have sufficient funds in place with which to achieve its objective of purchasing The Plough and turning it into a community-owned public house. In these circumstances I can give little weight to its intentions. Nevertheless, the formation of 'Shepreth Ploughshare' is indicative of a strong local desire for The Plough to once again become a community facility.
36. The NPPF is clear that part of promoting a strong rural economy is the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, including public houses. It also states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy and inclusive communities.
37. To support this approach the NPPF seeks for planning authorities to involve all sections of the community in planning decisions and amongst other matters, those decisions should aim to achieve places which promote opportunities for meetings between members of the community. It also notes that policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision of community facilities, including public houses. Although, as the Appellant points out, the NPPF is clear that applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals, it goes on to state that regard should also be had to the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.
38. Given its recent publication and extensive consultation I consider the NPPF to be a weighty material consideration.

Planning obligation

39. The Appellant has submitted a planning obligation pursuant to s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that is intended to provide contributions towards such matters as community facilities, recycling receptacles and open space. However, the absence of such an obligation did not form part of the Council's reasoning in refusing the application nor has the Council provided the policy basis for seeking any such contributions. In reaching my determination I have therefore found no need for the obligation - but neither have I accorded it any weight.

Conclusions

40. There are a number of matters that I consider weigh in favour of the proposed development. These include firstly that The Plough has not been a pub for some considerable time and that, notwithstanding its more recent use as a bar/restaurant, its conversion would not deprive the village of something that can currently be justly regarded as a community facility. Secondly, despite marketing the premises as a bar/restaurant for a period of some 4 years, the vendor has failed to secure a buyer. Thirdly, the former restaurant business proved unviable and had to be liquidated. The conversion would also result in a small supplement to the housing stock.

41. However, there are also matters weighing against the conversion. Firstly, the physical attributes of The Plough clearly make it suitable for a pub use and the proposed development would therefore result in the loss of a potential community facility – which it is accepted could be viable. Secondly, there are few other services and facilities in the village and the loss of even a potential facility takes on a particular significance. Thirdly, despite the lengthy period of marketing, I have reservations as to whether the asking price was realistic throughout that period and I do not regard the marketing so far carried out as carrying conclusive weight.
42. Based on the factors above I see the determination as being finely balanced. However, it is obvious that a substantial part of the community sees The Plough as a potentially valuable community facility and I am very much aware that approving the proposal is likely to result in the loss of that potential facility forever. I am also conscious of the weighty support offered by the NPPF to the retention and development of community facilities (including public houses) and its support for the involvement of all sections of the community in planning decisions. Taking these further considerations into account leads me to the conclusion that the loss of The Plough as a potential contributor to the social amenity of the village would be unacceptable.
43. Having had regard to all other matters before me I find nothing to add to or alter my finding above. The appeal must therefore fail.

Lloyd Rodgers

Inspector