

Local Village Pub Under Threat of Development

Thursday 11 March, 2021

'The Castle' pub in Outwood, Surrey, is under threat of being turned into housing, and being lost forever. The pub has been at the heart of this picturesque village for more than 150 years.

In that time the quintessential and popular inn has hosted myriad social events, parties, quizzes, local bands, Jubilee and Millennium celebrations, beer festivals, Morris Men, village society meetings, and funeral wakes. Until it closed recently, Dame Judi Dench and her family were regular customers. The pub has also welcomed other local celebrity residents in the past, including Shane Lynch, of Boyzone fame, and Chris Coleman, the ex-Wales, Fulham and Sunderland football manager.

Despite huge local opposition, and a community group coming together to try and save the pub and purchase and run it for the community, the current owner – a development company – has applied for a second time for planning permission to turn it into housing.

Locals say this would be a tragedy, and that the local planning authority (Tandridge District Council) would be flying in the face of the local community's wishes to keep and enhance this previously popular pub, which has been the hub of this largely rural community, if it approves the plans. Over 40 objections have been registered to the developer's latest planning application.

A non-profit local community group, Outwood CBS Ltd, has been formed by local residents to try and save the pub, with "an achievable vision for The Castle to be 'more than a just a pub', offering something for all groups within the community." The group is in the process of obtaining funding pledges to try and secure the pub's acquisition and make it operational again.

A spokesman for Outwood CBS said: "The Castle has been a much-loved, and much-valued, social hub of our village for many decades. It is known as the 'hidden pub' of Outwood and is a true 'villagers' local hostelry which has been at the heart of our community for as long as we can remember. Over the years we've lost our school, our shops and other assets – so to lose our favourite 'local' pub would be heartbreaking for our village – especially in these times when people in rural communities need more local facilities like this than ever before."

"The pub was recently awarded an 'Asset of Community Value' status, which is supposed to give it some protection from development, so we sincerely hope that Tandridge's Planning Department will support local residents by turning down the developer's latest planning application. We were dismayed last time when the Planning Officers initially recommended it for approval, before it was thankfully overwhelmingly turned down by Councillors at their Planning Committee meeting just last October, when the same developer had submitted an identical application. Turning The Castle into a house is an unwanted and hugely unpopular development. After all, it would become just another house, but once our pub is lost, is it lost forever."

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