

## Planning Statement

The Horns Public House, Crazies Hill RG10 8LY

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024

Rev 01

### 1. Introduction

This **Planning Statement** briefly explains the **planning issues** involved, firstly, in respect of those matters which require planning permission, as set out in the letter covering the submission of both the Planning and Listed Building planning applications and, secondly, those additional matters in respect of which Listed Building consent is sought.

As a precursor, a brief **overview** of the recent history associated with the property will be set out and this will be followed by a résumé of the broad scope of the **proposed works**.

### 2. Overview

Over the last 15 years The Horns public house has been occupied by a string of short term license holders of the WH Brakspear & Sons. The business model limited the buying power of the license holder and ultimately each failed to make the site financially viable; this included experienced and award-winning publicans.

In September 2022 the last tenant departed after two years in residence. The Horns is the only remaining public house in the hamlets of Crazies Hill, Cockpole Green and nearby Warren Row. Its closure has been a huge loss for the community for whom this is the main local venue to meet. The strength of the community desire to retain this local landmark inspired the creation of Horns Hospitality - a consortium of local residents - to initiate an offer to purchase the property from WH Brakspear & Sons in October 2023. The offer was based on a thoroughly researched business proposal which involves an increase in the number of table covers that could be serviced, and the renovation of a portion of the first floor to provide an element of overnight accommodation. Although advised the property was not for sale, negotiations ensued and Horns Hospitality purchased the property in March 2024.

### 3. Proposed Works

The proposal seeks to retain as much of the existing construction as possible as informed by the historic significance of the building fabric, whilst making internal alternations to optimise the spatial layout for both increased numbers of tables, and for an improved atmosphere and user experience. The east elevation entrance door is proposed to be replaced with a wider door leaf to provide wheelchair access into the building, in parallel with improved access to the Ground Floor Accessible WC. The new entrance will also be accompanied by a new timber-framed porch.

The first floor is proposed to be renovated to create two en-suite bedrooms available to be independently let. These two rooms would constitute a Change of Use from current Class E, to Class C1. The remaining first floor space would be renovated to create a one bedroom flat for a resident chef for which flexible use permission for both Class E and Class C1 is sought under Class V of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) (England) 2015.

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The two lettable rooms are proposed to be accessed directly from the outside with a new dedicated external door to the north elevation. En-suite provision is vital to the viability of the lettable rooms with respect to modern-day visitor expectations.

The existing gazebo is proposed to be replaced with a slate-roofed, timber frame structure, including provision of discrete photovoltaic solar panels on the south-west portion of the roof, alongside a small external kitchen to offer external dining to meet modern pub visitors' expectations. Critically, this improved structure and new sandstone patio finish are forecast in the business model to provide high quality external space for private parties to complement the range of internal spaces to be made available for dining internally within the Barn and Bar areas.

The roadside appearance is an important consideration and the timber roadside signage has rotted at its base and was agreed with Wokingham Borough Council to be carefully removed and stored on-site. It is proposed to be replaced with a timber sign of the same dimensions, with brand colours, font and new logo. The east elevation entrance door is proposed to have an over door light to be installed to aid access into the building.

The applicant, Horns Hospitality, commenced early engagement with the local authority to discuss its aspirations to improve the existing building to safeguard the longevity of the building by, and for, the local community. The applicant is grateful for the direction provided by the pre-app response (reference 241154) and has sought to address the matters raised.

### 4. Planning Issues Involved

#### (a) Planning Application

The **planning issues** involved with regard to the **planning application** are fairly limited and relate just to the proposed change of use of two first floor rooms; the replacement gazebo; the related works within the garden area and some minor external alterations to the building.

The only real issue in broad planning terms with regard to the proposed **change of use** of two of the first floor rooms from Class E to Class C1 use, and the remainder to a flexible Class E / Class C1 use, is perhaps the potential loss of accommodation to meet the operational needs of the public house use. However, it is proposed that accommodation will remain available for a manager (and partner) or staff, should it be required. It is not likely, therefore, to lead to a demand for additional residential accommodation in the area.

The letting rooms are regarded as being essential with regard to the overall viability of the project and, to that extent, will assist in ensuring the public house will be brought back into use, thereby contributing to the overall objective of preserving this Listed Building.

The issues highlighted by the Built Heritage Officer, in his memorandum of 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024, relating to the form / location of the proposed en-suite bathrooms in the two letting rooms, have now been dealt with in this submitted scheme, so that that the historic importance of the timber frame will be unaffected.

As for the **replacement gazebo**, the planning issue here is essentially one of appearance. It could be argued that the existing gazebo has a detrimental effect upon the setting of the Listed Building, in view of its design and choice of materials, whereas this proposed replacement will be a slate-roofed, timber framed structure over a sandstone patio finish. It is suggested that this will represent a vast improvement in visual terms, contributing positively to the setting and overall character of the Listed Building.

Turning to the **external alterations** to the Listed Building which may require planning permission, these involve:

- (i) The widening of the side entrance door and the narrowing of the external adjacent window, with a new porch over the entrance. This will all be carried out in a sensitive manner and have no impact upon the external appearance of the building, and
- (ii) The removal of one door and the insertion of one new door in the rear elevation which will, likewise, be carried out in a sensitive manner, with the design and materials matching the existing building.

### **(b) Listed Building Consent Application**

The planning issues involved associated with the Listed Building Consent application include those mentioned above but, also, the wider issues concerning the preservation of the Listed Building. These can be summarised as follows, with relevant Policies highlighted and commented upon.

### **Planning Policy Context**

The following policies (assessed further below) are of particular relevance to the Application:

- Local Plan CP1 – Sustainable Development (and as responds to the emerging CE7 Policy in the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan)
- Local Plan CP3 – General Principles for Development Policy
- Managing Development Delivery (MDD) - TB01: Development within the Green Belt
- Managing Development Delivery (MDD) - TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)
- The Emerging Policy ER3: Supporting the rural economy, (Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan)
- The Emerging Policy DH5: The historic environment (Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan)

#### Local Plan CP1 – Sustainable Development

The proposal will enhance the quality of this community amenity and bring a currently neglected building back into use. The high quality design proposals will elevate both the internal and external environment of the listed property. The design will provide an attractive, functional, and more accessible facility than that previously provided by this site for the local community.

The proposals incorporate a range of measures for the sustainable economic improvement of the site, funded by the community with a strong desire to maintain an important local facility.

The replacement gazebo is proposed to incorporate photovoltaic solar panels to the south-west roof elevation. The gazebo provides the opportunity to incorporate on-site renewable energy generation in a discrete manner, appropriate in scale to the setting of the listed building. This seeks to address the emerging *CE7 Policy for low carbon and renewable energy generation*.

Local Plan CP3 – General Principles for Development

The proposals respond to relevant criteria of the CP3 policy, and are of an appropriate scale and level of activity for the site, to support the continued quality of life for the local community:

- The proposals incorporate improved safe access to the building that support the blend of family life.
- The existing envelope of the building will be retained undisturbed causing no disturbance to ecology.
- The proposals will bring back a community facility that has been proven to be unsustainable in the past.

Refer to the enclosed Design and Access Statement and drawings for details of the proposal.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD) - TB01: Development within the Green Belt

The proposal is to replace the existing gazebo with a high quality timber frame construction with slate roof. The external space would relieve the internal space of occupants and the effectively manage number of clientele without the need to create a further extension to the property. The external space is considered important to the economic viability of the pub as it offers a useable space throughout the seasons as an alternative to the enclosed indoor provision. The gazebo is, therefore, an appropriate facility for outdoor recreation.

The discrete location of the covered area is not considered to negatively impact upon the character of the Area of Special Character (refer to the Impact Assessment within the Heritage Statement), and by extension is not considered to impact upon the open character of the Green Belt. The open-sided structure preserves openness and is in keeping with the rural character of the area. The design and materials to be used for this structure will result in a considerable improvement to the setting of the Listed Building.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD) - TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)

The Horns Public House is a Designated Heritage Asset: Grade II listed, Historic England list entry 1118166, listed on the 23.12.83, and is situated within the Crazies Hill Area of Special Character.

The enclosed combined Design & Access and Heritage Statement describes the historic significance of the property and that of the Area of Special Character. The proposals incorporate measures to conserve the historic significance of, and where possible, to enhance its historic significance. The property has been demonstrated to be at risk of permanent closure, and the initiative by Horns Hospitality to renovate the property to serve its current optimum viable use is an important consideration with respect to the successful management of change to this heritage asset. The Heritage Statement includes the Impact Assessment of the changes upon the historic significance balanced with the public benefit.

Emerging Policy ER3: Supporting the rural economy

The proposal for an increased range of space and recreational activities, and new accommodation option, compared to the previous limited provision, will support the employment of five full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, comprising three full-time employees and up to seven part-time employees. This would increase the employment capacity of the site by one full-time employee and up to five part-time employees. The internal alterations proposed would increase the floor area for diners; the external enlargement of the gazebo would increase the useable outdoor space to support higher numbers of people attracted to the high quality environment for a variety of private family gatherings. Additionally, the overnight accommodation shall support local housekeeper employment, and general increased cleaning and maintenance staff. Employment shall be encouraged to be drawn largely from the immediate village in line with the community ethos of the business and to promote sustainable transport – by foot – to the pub.

The investment by the community into this local amenity shall retain value for the benefit of the village and immediate area in support of the rural economy.

The Emerging Policy DH5: The historic environment

The Impact Assessment identifies a limited number of changes that are considered to have the potential for 'less than substantial harm' upon the historic significance of the Grade II listed property. Any limited impact of the proposal has been mitigated in the design process, in response to the pre-app feedback. Justification for the proposal and the public benefit that the scheme will deliver can be described as follows:

1. The increased floor area and improvement of internal spatial quality achieved by the removal of the chimney breasts at ground floor level that have a low level of historic significance will:
  - provide increased revenue to the business to support the economic sustainability of the business in support of the rural economy
  - create high quality spaces for the benefit of all visitors
2. The investment in the local community:
  - provision of a welcoming community space that has been demonstrably missed since the closure in September 2022.
  - the creation of local full- and part-time jobs to support the rural economy
  - the provision of high quality internal and external facilities
  - reduce running costs by on-site electricity generation appropriate to its context for future-proofing its long term economic stability.
3. The retention and appropriate use of a local landmark building that is nationally protected by its listed status:
  - reduces the risk the building falling into disrepair through lack of a viable use or investment
  - its retention will enhance the rural environment by its on-going management and upkeep
  - it regains its role as a community asset.

## **5. Conclusions**

The proposals seek to enhance the community asset of The Horns for wider public benefit across a range of interrelated factors: the appropriate re-use of the historic environment; the rural economy; the reduction in carbon footprint; the development of a community asset to meet local amenity needs.

It is respectfully requested planning and listed building consent is granted for the proposed scheme that can demonstrate a range of public benefits and can be delivered by carefully managed change to the heritage asset of The Horns Public House at Crazies Hill.