

FTAO Amanda Baker

Re: The Lord Nelson, Oakamoor Case Reference APP/B3438/W/16/3157636

Having made comment on the original application, I have been informed that I am able to make further comment on this appeal. I believe the decision of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Councils Planning Committee was an appropriate one and fully in accord with both the Core Strategy and the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

For example, the Core Strategy SA1 Paragraph 7.16 states that *“In the smaller villages there will be limited development only, principally for local housing needs and rural diversification, whilst the countryside areas outside market towns and villages, including hamlets and other small settlements, will be subject to strict control over development with an emphasis on meeting essential rural needs, promoting environmental enhancement including landscape and biodiversity, and on encouraging appropriate economic diversification and tourism”*. Furthermore, the removal of a Public House, which previously had short stay letting bedrooms, appears contradictory to SS7 and the stated desire to support sustainable tourism within the Churnet valley. The Churnet Valley Masterplan also contains direct reference to public houses in Oakamoor as a Key Activity in paragraph 7.6.2 *“Improvement of visitor welcome at Oakamoor Village and create a basis for woodland walks in the area, including improving public houses in the village”*.

I would also like to point some anomalies within the additional information supplied in support of this appeal. The letter from Matt Whiteley of James A Baker is inaccurate in respect of the timing of the business closing. He states “It is our understanding that once marketing of the property commenced, and perhaps even prior, the public house had ceased trading, opening only sporadically”, which is not true. The previous owners kept the premises open and trading until the weekend before the present owners moved in and whilst there is no evidence to support this, it is believed that this was at the request of the agents. A farewell party was held on the evening of 19th March and the property was open on the lunchtime of the 20th March as the outgoing owners packed. It has not opened since.

Mr Whiteley’s reference to the needs of the community being served by the “Cricketer’s Rest” is also inaccurate and demonstrates a lack of area knowledge. Firstly, the other premises is actually called the Cricketer’s Arms and secondly, the Cricketer’s Arms and the Lord Nelson are very different offers. The primary difference being the lack of a food provision at the Cricketer’s Arms which was present at the Lord Nelson. Approval of this application would have left the local community without a local food offer and would be contrary to the tourism aspirations stated in the Core Strategy and the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

With regard to the marketing of the premises, I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of Mr Whiteley’s account. However, it could be true that the real value of the premises, as a public house, was below that at which it was offered. The James A Baker website is currently listing public houses with an offer price below the £195,000 requested for the Lord Nelson and it is believed that refurbishment is required at the Lord Nelson, which would of course reduce the price anyone was willing to pay. As a five-bedroomed residential property, however, the asking price is extremely low for the area.

Finally, I would like to make you aware of the local support that exists for maintaining the current status of the premises. A group has been formed (Lord Nelson Oakamoor Community Group) to nominate Lord Nelson as an Asset of Community Value. Although the group was not in existence at the time of the initial planning application, it does indicate that there are many people that disagree with the assumption that there is alternative provision in the area. I understand the nomination is imminent.

Yours faithfully,

Susan Loynes