

The planning officer spoke first describing the main changes:

- Adding a fifth floor to the building which would increase the number of flats from 44 to 54. This increase in the number of units (31 x 1 bed, 22 x 2 bed, and 1 studio and the removal of the 3 bed units) was justified as the developers would be able to provide 16 units as 'affordable' housing on a shared ownership basis.
- The number of car parking spaces remains same at 39 but there would be 66 cycle spaces for residents.
- Specification of the size of flexible function room space as 82sqm, (current function room size is 140sqm) which would be part of the bar seating area and not a dedicated space. Bi-fold doors would be used to separate off this area from the bar area when it is in use. Several restrictions about when the space could be used and its cost were specified (see below in SDCT objection).

The planning officer stated that the majority of those consulted were in favour of the proposals but this was based on people saying that they welcomed the pub being refurbished including keeping the original Edwardian façade. There was, in fact, a lot of opposition to the size and design of the new residential development and the reduction in the function room space making it unsuitable for some community groups. He also referred to 2 letters from individuals who supported the plans but didn't mention the number of local **groups** such as FLDR, SDCT, Friends of Lakes Estate Conservation Group and users of the function room such as Talkies, music clubs etc who had objected. It came across as a very biased account of the consultation and did not take account of the concerns expressed by local people.

Jane Maggs (from SDCT) spoke against the application and focused on the Fox Pub having obtained the status of an ACV (Asset of Community Value) in 2015. The ACV was being affected as the flexible function room space was considerably smaller than the original function room and there were doubts about soundproofing. Also, the hours when the space could be used by the community were restricted to Monday and Tuesday afternoons and evenings after 2.30pm and the pub could limit its use to just 5 hours per week. The community groups would want to hire the space at a 'community' rate as the market rate was likely to be too high. The SDCT also took exception to the design of the residential building as too large and too dominant next to the pub and out of character with the neighbouring properties.

Dennis Stacey (Chair of the Conservation Advisory Group) spoke against the application mainly in terms of the design of the residential building as too large and dominant particularly as it would now have five floors and is not set back from the pavement nor has any landscaping in front of it. The new building would completely dominate the restored Edwardian pub façade and the pub's importance as a listed heritage building and historic landmark in Palmers Green would be lost. He pointed out that there was an example of a well-designed building nearby with the Green Dragon Pub in Winchmore Hill. The frontage of the pub had been restored and its landmark position on Green Lanes had been preserved as the retail and residential development had been sympathetically built and located behind and at the side of the pub.

A spokesman from the developer, Star Pubs, spoke for the application (and was not restricted to 5 minutes like the objectors). He said that the development was providing housing for local people as approx.30% of the flats would be classed as 'affordable' housing.

However, the flats would have to be bought on a shared ownership basis and no estimates of prices were given. He stated that local people wanted the development and quoted verbatim a letter from just one individual who was strongly in favour and claimed that he represented young people in the area. No members of the audience were allowed to refute this statement and the fact that there were objections to the proposals from a wide variety of local people and local groups was omitted completely.

The councillors were able to ask questions of the planning officer but his answers always seemed to be couched in favour of the development. The overriding factor was that the development provided housing and the size and design of the residential building was seen as of minimal importance. A councillor raised the issue of car parking spaces for the residents (54 flats but only 39 spaces) but was told that it was acceptable as the area has good public transport. The only concessions made were that the planning officers would look into the conditions for letting the function room in terms of hours, soundproofing and costs so that it would be more acceptable for community groups.

We felt that this planning meeting was very disappointing as no mention was made of the written objections cited by many of the local groups representing local residents (apart from the 2 speakers). It seemed to be a travesty of the consultation process as both the planning spokesman and the developer were allowed to quote from just one local person who was in favour of the development (and one other person in the case of the planning officer) and ignore all the objections sent in. Although the objections were given in the accompanying papers I doubt that the councillors would have read all the details given in the sixty page report before the meeting.

Sue Younger