

Littlemore Parish Council

20/00934/FUL | Erection of 2 x 1 bed, 3 x 2 bed and 3 x 3 bed dwellings with associated off-street parking, private amenity, secure bicycle parking and recycling and refuse storage provisions. | Land To The Rear Of The George Inn 5 Sandford Road Littlemore Oxford Oxfordshire OX4 4PU

Littlemore Parish Council strongly objects to this application. The George Inn is a historic building in the centre of the Littlemore Conservation area. The main reason for the designation of the old part of the village as a conservation area is the leafy rural nature of the street scene. The George makes a significant contribution to this. While not listed, it is attached to the Old House which is Grade 2 listed. It has an association with St John Henry Newman who lodged there during the period when he was ministering to parishioners here. The building dates back to at least the 18th century and the land behind was originally used for coaches and horses when it was a coaching inn on the old road between Oxford and Henley.

The development of the major proportion of land behind the pub will leave minimal outdoor space. This space is used at present for a variety of community purposes: regular family events with stalls and fairground activities, and fun runs. It provides an area where families can play and children can run around while using the pub. The skittle alley is in regular use. All this will be lost if the proposed scheme goes ahead.

The pub is a genuine asset to the community with numerous darts teams, two skittles teams, over-60s music nights, over-60s monthly lunches, a weekly draw and other events.

Parents of children attending Emmanuel Christian School have been given permission to park behind the pub at the beginning and end of the school day to avoid causing congestion on Sandford Road. Few pupils at this fee-paying school live in Littlemore so car use is high.

Being one of only two or three pubs within walking distance of the Kassam Stadium, the George and its car park is heavily used on match days. In addition, it is a pick-up point for local people attending away games and is used then too.

Reducing the number of car parking spaces to seven would in itself threaten the pub as a going concern. Older customers would be deterred from visiting if they worried about finding somewhere nearby to park. The bus service does not run in the evening - see below. The car park is full on both home and away match days, when the landlord arranges security at the gate to regulate admission.

Pubs are closing around the country and a landlord or landlady has to make huge efforts to remain viable as a going concern. To lose so much outside space would almost certainly lead to the demise of the George as a public house.

The applicant's transport assessment describes the bus service as running every few minutes. It confuses the 3A bus service which serves Littlemore and Oxford Science Park with the 3 service which terminates at the Rose Hill Oval and does not come through Littlemore. The 3A service runs every half hour, less frequently in the afternoon, does not run after 2000 hours and has no service on Sundays and Bank Holidays. There is no way that this can be described as a good service, and demonstrates a lack of local knowledge on the part of the applicant.

Having said that, Littlemore Parish Council feels that there may be scope for a maximum of three small housing units towards the rear of the site as long as enough space remains to allow the pub to maintain the current level of use, and hopefully increase its activities to safeguard against future closure.

Cllr Sue Stewart, Chair, Planning Committee, Littlemore Parish Council

[REDACTED]

Richard Wilkins, Clerk, Littlemore Parish Council

[REDACTED]