

DHSR Ltd

The Hop Poles, Alton

CAMRA Public House

Viability Test

May 2021

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Hedley Clark Planning on behalf of DHSR Ltd. This statement has regard to relevant East Hampshire District Council Local Plan Policies, which advocates applying the Campaign for Real Ales' (CAMRA) Public House Viability Test.

Public houses in the United Kingdom have come under considerable threat from a number of sources over the past decades. The smoking ban which came into force on 1st July 2007 has discouraged regular drinkers from drinking in pubs; the increasing availability of cheap alcoholic drinks from supermarkets has altered drinking habits; and the economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to have a huge impact on trade. Taken together, these factors have contributed to increasingly difficult trading conditions for publicans. As a result the number of public houses continues to fall with closures through lack of trade, even when well run, as there is simply not enough business to sustain every pub.

Section 8 of the NPPF recognises the important role the planning system can play in creating healthy and inclusive communities. A key principle of paragraph 92 is to 'provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs' and requires planning policies and decisions to:

- Plan positively for the provisions and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public

houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

- Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Policy HC1 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review states that the loss of community facilities will not be permitted unless either alternative facilities exist which are acceptable in terms of location, size, range and quality of provision, or the use is not viable and that every reasonable attempt has been made to retain it. The supporting text to the policy recommends that proposals to replace public houses should be supported by statements guided by the approach set out in the CAMRA Public House Viability Test.

The CAMRA Public House Viability Test is designed to provide an objective means of assessing whether a public house is unviable, whether this is because the area is over-supplied with Public Houses, the premises too small, or the catchment area not large enough. CAMRA notes that "the Viability Test does not seek to protect the continued existence of each and every pub in the land. Times and circumstances do change and some pubs will find themselves struggling to continue as a going concern". What CAMRA has provided is a set of criteria to enable informed judgments to be made on a case-by-case basis.

This report follows the format of the Public House Viability Test produced by CAMRA. The CAMRA Public House Viability Test sets out the following considerations when assessing the continuing viability of a pub business:-

- a) Assessing Trade Potential – population density, visitor potential, competition, flexibility of the site, parking, public transport and multiple use
- b) Competition Case Studies – what are the factors contributing to the success of profitable public houses in the area
- c) The Business at Present – how has the business been run and what efforts have been made to achieve profitability?
- d) The Sale – how was the public house offered for sale and at what price?

This report addresses each of these criteria in turn.

The Hop Poles History

The Hop Poles is a Grade II Listed property and comprises a 2 storey building in a typical Hampshire style; The building is low-built of brick construction under a slate roof. A number of alterations to the property have been made, namely a substantial, flat roofed, ground floor extension to the rear and a rear first floor extension completed in 1983.

A brief history of The Hop Poles is set out below:

Constructed in the early 19th Century.

In 1842 it belonged to Edward Waring, but it was bought by Crowleys Brewery and turned into a public house by 1848.

Granted Grade II listed property^[1] On 31st March 1977.

Addition of new bar area, toilets and lobby granted planning consent 1983 – Change of use from Public House (Class A4) to Hotel (Class C1) Granted permission 2011 – Application to retain timber framed lean-to smoking shelter to rear Refused planning consent 2012 – Closed Down October 2019 – Marketed by Vail Williams December 2019 - Sold to DHSR Ltd November 2020.

Assessing Trade Potential

1. Local trade

1.1 What is the location of the pub? Is it in a village, suburban area, town centre or isolated countryside?

The pub is located on the periphery of Alton Town Centre. Alton comprises a Market Town within the jurisdiction of East Hampshire District Council and offers reasonable employment and leisure opportunities.

1.2 What is the catchment area of the pub?

The Hop Poles is located south west of the High Street. The catchment area is considered to be central, southern and western Alton, with the wider area comprising the rest of the town

1.3 How many adults live within a one mile radius?

Alton Parish has an adult population (18+) of 12,795 (2011 Census)

1.4 In rural areas, how many adults live within a ten mile radius?

N/A

1.5 Are there any developments planned for the area? Industrial, residential, strategic projects?

Several sites were identified in the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review including residential developments at the former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital and on Land in Upper Anstey Lane, Borovere Farm and land to the east of Will Hall Farm.

Additionally the former Coors Brewery will provide further housing in the following few years

Allocated sites for industrial and business uses included land at Alton Business Park, Alton Sewage Treatment Works, and on land at the former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital. A further 700 new dwellings are proposed in Alton in the emerging East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core strategy.

1.6 Is there a daytime working population?

Usual residents of Alton in employment comprise 9,130 (2011 Census). The Hop Poles is located on the periphery of Alton Town Centre, where surrounding uses comprise a mix of residential and retail. The town centre provides significant employment opportunities and numerous public houses are located within this area.

The settlement also provides significant employment opportunities within its industrial area, centered on Mill Lane. Alton is designated as one of two Market Towns within the East Hampshire District, and is recognised as having a significant economic role. Eleven other public houses are located closer to the Mill Lane industrial area than The Hop Poles.

The Hop Poles was not considered to be well used by the local daytime working population, given that other public houses exist within the town centre and in closer proximity to the industrial area. It is considered that the Hop Poles struggled against competition from these more suitable and higher standard public houses.

2. Customer potential

2.1 Does the pub act as a focus for community activities? Sports teams, social groups, local societies, community meetings etc?

No, not as far as we are aware.

2.2 Is the pub in a well visited/popular location? Is it in a picturesque town or village, on a canal/river side, on a long distance footpath, or on a cycle route?

The pub is located outside, but on the periphery of the Alton Town Centre boundary and outside of the primary and secondary shopping frontage, but within a conservation area. Alton is located just outside of the South Downs National Park. The Hop Poles is located on the St Swithun's Way, a 34 mile walk from Winchester to Farnham. 9 other pubs in Alton are also located on the St Swithun's Way route. Route 224 of the Sustrans cycle network runs within a quarter of a mile of The Hop Poles.

2.3 Does the pub appeal to those who regularly drive out to pubs?

No – The Hop Poles is not considered to be a 'destination pub'.

2.4 Is tourism encouraged in the area?

Yes – Tourism is encouraged by East Hampshire District Council and Alton is a popular

destination located on the edge of the South Downs National Park, the role of which is to promote tourist activity.

2.5 Has the pub ever been included in any visitor or tourist guide?

The Hop Poles was listed on a number of websites including:

- useyourlocal.com
- yelp.co.uk
- The Good Pub Guide.co.uk
- Beerintheevening.com

3. Competition

3.1 In rural areas, how many pubs are there within a one mile radius and within a five mile radius?

N/A

3.2 In urban areas, how many pubs are there within reasonable walking distance?

There are currently 17 public houses in addition to the Hop Poles within 2 miles. 15 are located under a mile away and 13 are located within half a mile. Four are hotels that offer drinking facilities for non-residents. There are 3 pubs within 100 metres to the Hop Poles.

1. The George, Butts Road, Alton, GU34 1LH – 0.0 miles

Located within Alton Town Centre and the conservation area. In an area characterised by a mix of uses including residential and retail.

2. The Ivy House, Draymans Way, Alton, GU34 1SS – less than 0.1 miles

Owned by JD Wetherspoon. Located within Alton Town Centre and the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by mainly retail uses. The Ivy House opened in March 2015 and has taken a lot of business away from old established pubs in the town centre.

3. The White Horse, High Street, Alton, GU34 1EN – less than 0.1 miles

Located in the primary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the

conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by retail uses.

4. The Market Hotel, Market Square, Alton, GU34 1HD – 0.2 miles

Located in the secondary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by predominately retail uses.

5. The Wheatsheaf, Market Square, Alton, GU34 1HD – 0.2 miles

Located in the secondary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by predominately retail uses.

6. The Ten Tun Tap, Market Square, Alton, GU34 1HZ – 0.2 miles

Formerly known as Cellar Vie. Located in the secondary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by predominately retail uses.

7. The Kings Head, Market Street, Alton, GU34 1H4 – 0.2 miles

Located in the primary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by retail uses.

8. The Swan Hotel, High Street, Alton, GU34 1TS – 0.2 miles

Located in the primary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by retail uses.

9. The Bakers Arms, High Street, Alton, GU34 1BN – 0.3 miles

Located in the primary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by retail uses.

10. The Crown Hotel, High Street, Alton, GU34 1BN – 0.3 miles

Located in the secondary retail frontage of Alton Town Centre and within the conservation area. The surrounding area is characterised by predominately retail uses.

11. The Eight Bells, Church Street, Alton, GU34 2DA – 0.4 miles

Located north of Alton Town Centre but within the conservation area in an area

characterised by residential properties.

12. The French Horn, The Butts, Alton, GU34 1RT – 0.4 miles

Located to the south of Alton Town Centre, but within the conservation area and in an area characterised by residential properties. This pub is located on the A339 and at Alton's southernmost gateway into the town.

13. The Alton House Hotel, Normandy St, Alton, GU34 1DW – 0.5 miles

Located to the North East of Alton Town centre, predominantly a hotel, but with bar facilities open to non-residents.

14. The Railway Arms, Anstey Road, Alton, GU34 2RB – 0.7 miles

Located on the north-eastern periphery of Alton Town centre and directly north of Alton train Station.

15. The Greyfriar, Winchester Road, Chawton, Alton, GU34 1SB – 0.9 miles

Located in Chawton, just to the west of Alton in an area characterised by residential properties.

16. The Queens Head, London Road, Alton, GU34 4EG – 1.2 miles

Located to the north east of Alton centre on the edge of the town.

17. The White Hart, London Road, Holybourne, Alton, GU34 4EY – 1.9 miles

Located to the north east of Alton within the adjoining village of Holybourne.

3.3 Bearing in mind that people like to have choices, does the pub, by its character, location, design, potentially cater for different groups of people from those of its nearest competitor(s)?

The pub has a history of being 'wet led'.

3.2 If not, could the pub be developed to cater for different groups?

The pub would need to be significantly extended to build a much larger kitchen than already exists in order to appeal to dining customers

4. Flexibility of the site

- 4.1 Does the pub have unused rooms or outbuildings that could be brought into use? Function rooms, store rooms etc.

No

- 4.2 Is the site large enough to allow for building extensions?

It is unlikely, given the constraints of the site, its Grade II Listing and its location within the Alton Conservation Area.

- 4.3 Have planning applications ever been submitted to extend/develop the pub building? If yes, when and what was the outcome?

Yes. A large ground floor extension was permitted in 1983 to extend the bar area, create a lobby and new male and female toilet facilities. Further extensions, by way of a large smoking shelter were refused and dismissed on appeal in 2012. Change of use was also granted in 2010 to change the use of the pub to allow the first floor to be used as B&B rooms. No upgrading work was carried out at the time and it would require significant investment to bring this accommodation up to modern standards.

- 4.4 If planning consent was not available for building work, is any adjoining land suitable for any other use? Camping facility etc

N/A

- 4.5 Has the pub been well maintained?

No

5 Parking

Is there access to appropriate numbers of car parking spaces? • If not, is there any scope for expansion?

No and No. A large public car park is located 25 metres from the pub.

6. Public Transport

6.1 Is there a bus stop outside or near the pub and/or a rail station within easy walking distance?

Yes, a bus stop is located 50 metres south west of The Hop Poles outside of the Alton Conservative Club – Stagecoach bus route 64 running between Winchester and Alton. Alton Railway Station is located 0.8 miles away offering direct services to London Waterloo.

6.2 How frequent and reliable is public transport in the area?

The no. 64 bus runs through the centre of Alton Town Centre and provides a service within easy walking distance to all the pubs in Alton. Another service (Stagecoach bus number 38) offers a half-hourly service linking Alton with Petersfield. There is no reason to doubt the reliability of public transport in the area.

6.3 Has the pub made actual/potential customers aware of any public transport services available to/from it?

Bus stop located 50 metres away and Alton railway station 0.8 miles away, so it should be evident to customers.

6.4 Are there taxi firms in the locality?

Yes, there are several taxi firms operating within the town and the local area.

6.5 If yes, has the pub entered any favourable agreements with a local taxi firm?

Not known

7 Multiple Use

7.1 In light of government guidance through the National Planning Policy Framework (see the Appendix) what is the extent of community facilities in the local area – is there a shop, post office, community centre etc?

Alton is defined as a Market Town within East Hampshire District Council and is second only to Petersfield in terms of the services and facilities on offer. The Hop Poles is located on the periphery of Alton Town Centre, which provides a full range of shops

and facilities including a post office, various restaurants, supermarkets, convenience stores and a community centre.

- 7.2 If the pub is the sole remaining facility within the area, is there scope for the pub to combine its function with that of a shop, post office or other community use, bed & breakfast or self-catering – especially in tourist areas?

N/A – there are sixteen other pubs within Alton, plus extensive shopping facilities and other public assets within the town centre.

8. Partial loss

These questions come into play if the application seeks changes, which would reduce the size of the pub or convert non-public areas, such as licensee accommodation, to other uses.

- 8.1 How would the proposals impact on the long-term financial health of the business? Would a smaller pub still be able to attract sufficient trade? Would the smaller size make it less attractive to customers e.g. because there were reduced facilities such as no meeting room, less parking, smaller garden?

N/A

- 8.2 Would any loss of licensee accommodation make the pub less attractive to potential future publicans?

N/A

9 Competition case studies

- 9.1 Are there any successful pubs in neighbouring areas of similar population density? What factors are contributing to their success?

The case studies below examine each of the sixteen pubs/drinking establishments in Alton, including the Hop Poles. The pubs have been ranked according to their popularity rating as set out in the review website www.tripadvisor.com Nearly all the pubs and hotels within Alton are listed on this website and the ratings represent average scorings for each pub over a number of years. Information is also provided regarding location, parking, food entertainment, factor for success, planning

applications, potential for expansion etc.

9.2 1. The George – Trip Advisor Rating 4.5/5

The George is a Grade II listed property, formerly known as the Dukes Head. In 2010 the property was revamped and has featured in the good beer guide since 2011. The Pub has won CAMRA Best Pub in Hampshire several years in a row. The pub offered open-mic nights twice a month as well as a variety of frequent visiting bands and performers. The pub also served fresh food and has two beer gardens and a parking area. It is located immediately adjacent the Hop Poles. In 1998 whilst known as the Dukes Head permission was sought for internal alterations to enlarge the lounge and provide additional stairs to first floor level with the removal of exiting side lean-to. This was refused permission. Permission was granted in May 2018 for a modest single storey extension to the kitchen and internal alterations, which has not yet been implemented.

The George is owned by Punch Taverns and has tenant landlords (April 2021)

9.2 2. The Railway Arms Trip advisor rating 4.5/5

Popular free house, offering an excellent selection of real ales and a friendly atmosphere. The Pub is located north of the town centre and is approximately a 2 to 3 minutes walk from the train station. The pub has some outdoor seating, but has no car parking.

9.3 3. The French Horn – Trip advisor rating 4/5

The French Horn is a Grade II listed building located at the southern gateway to Alton off the A339. It offers a selection of real ales, hot food (including Sunday Roasts) and is geared towards a mix of clients including, families and drinkers. Facilities include beer garden, separate skittle alley, parking area, club room and meeting rooms. The pub is fully equipped with WiFi. Permission was granted to extend the building with side and rear extensions in the 1997, however it is unclear whether this was implemented. The building is set in a large plot with further potential to extend subject to Planning consent.

9.4 4. The Queens Head – Trip advisor rating 4/5

The Queens Head is located approximately 1km north of Alton town centre on the periphery of Holybourne. It is a large pub offering restaurant and lounge facilities, including an extensive beer garden area with play area for children. The pub is family oriented but also hosts a variety of events including quiz and karaoke nights and charity dart games. The pub sells real ales and has TV sports as well as a pool table and dart board. In 2007 permission was granted for a single storey side extension to provide new toilets and a new covered patio area. The property is set in an extensive plot with sufficient room for future extension.

9.5 5. The White Horse – Trip Advisor rating 4/5

The White Horse is a Grade II listed building located on the edge of Alton town centre. It has a range of services, including accommodation, real ale, food, TV for sporting events and outside seating. The pub has an extensive area of parking to the rear. No recent planning applications have been made to extend or alter the property. However, various outbuildings are located to the rear of the pub – these are in a dilapidated condition and could offer the potential for future renovation and re-modelling for a more efficient use of the plot.

9.6 6. The Swan Hotel – Trip Advisor rating 3.5/5

The Swan Hotel is a Grade II listed property, which is located within the centre of Alton Town Centre. The hotel has a bar/lounge, free parking, a restaurant and free high speed internet. It also allows pets, is fully disabled friendly and provides room service. In 2011 the property was fully redecorated and internal and external alterations were made. Various application have been made on site including the conversion of various outbuildings to residential and office uses during the early 2000s.

9.7 7. The Wheatsheaf – Trip Advisor rating 3.5/5

The Wheatsheaf is located north of Alton Town Centre and is a Grade II listed property. This pub offers food, sports coverage, a dartboard and pool table. In addition the pub offers accommodation, facilities for private functions and meetings with free WiFi access. Permission was sought for internal and external alterations in 1996 but it is unclear from East Hampshire District Council's website whether permission was granted. The property has no exclusive parking however is well served by the nearby Ladyplace public car park. The Pub has recently (2019) undergone a complete refurbishment and now attracts a more up market clientele.

9.8 8. The Market Hotel – Trip Advisor rating 3.5/5

The Market Hotel is located north of the High Street in a pedestrianised square, with surrounding restaurants, eateries and other drinking establishments. The property is advertised as a “pub that serves food, not a restaurant that serves drinks”, food served Monday–Saturday and not on Sunday. The pub offers weekly food deals including steak night, curry night and fish market Fridays. Alongside the public house is the hotel offering 5 en-suite rooms with B&B options. Also available is a function room. The pub/hotel has no parking facilities however the nearby Ladyplace car park provides adequate provision. The property was granted permission in July 2003 for a side and rear extension, and in 2008 permission was granted for an awning covering the existing outdoor seating area. Given the constrained nature of the plot there is limited room for any further extensions.

9.9 9. The Crown Hotel – Trip Advisor rating 3/5

The Crown Hotel is a Grade II listed property located 1 minute walk from the centre of Alton. It offers facilities including a lounge bar (offering hot food at breakfast, lunch and dinner), outside decking, and private function bars. The hotel also has 14 rooms each with en suite, TV and tea/coffee making capabilities. The hotel also has a small service car park to the rear. Various applications were submitted and then granted to bring the existing basement into better use, including windows and further excavation. Other notable applications include the retention of decking to the rear of the hotel. Given the constrained nature of the plot it is unlikely that any further extension works could take place.

The Hotel/bar has mixed reviews on websites including www.tripadvisor.co.uk and www.beerintheevening.com.

9.10 10. The Alton House Hotel – Trip Advisor rating 3.5/5

The Alton House Hotel is Grade II listed and describes itself as a country house hotel within the idyllic town of Alton. It has 43 rooms and is registered to hold civil wedding ceremonies in its function rooms and garden. The hotel has a bar/lounge, restaurant, free parking and conference facilities. Various applications have been submitted in recent years to develop the swimming pool area into housing rather than enhanced facilities for the benefit of the hotel.

9.11 11. The Ivy House – JD Wetherspoon – Trip Advisor rating 3/5

The Ivy House is a relatively new addition to Alton's pub roster. Formerly a Grade II Listed office building with a large modern extension, it was converted by JD Wetherspoon in March 2015 into a 10,000 Sq Ft (940 SqM) SuperPub offering several Bar and Dining areas and outside spaces. The Ivy House is located within 80 metres of The Hop Poles. It could be argued that The Hop Poles' demise as the pub of choice for the younger clientele of Alton, has been as a direct result of the competition from the Wetherspools and its business model of low beer prices and cheap food. The Ivy House offers 7 day, all day opening from 08.00am until midnight and has a late night opening licence on Fridays and Saturdays until 01.00

Further expansion of the Ivy House is unlikely.

9.11 12. The Eight Bells – No Trip Advisor rating

A popular free house offering a selection of real ales and a variety of popular local ales. The pub focuses on a being traditional, with a cosy atmosphere, wood burning stove and beer garden for summer evenings. The pub does not contain fruit machines or pool tables. The pub is located in the historic core of Alton, and comprises a back of pavement property with no parking area. The building is Grade II listed and no significant attempt has been made to extend the property. Whilst a weatherboard porch to the rear was approved in July 2010, it is unlikely that the property will be able to extend.

9.12 12. The Bakers Arms – No Trip Advisor rating

The Bakers Arms is located in the centre of Alton Town High Street and has a TV, a dartboard, fruit machines and it also serves food. The pub has no exclusive parking area and is within a constrained plot. Permission was granted for internal and external alterations, together with a side extension in 1996. An awning to the front of the property was permitted in November 2007. Permission was granted in December 2017 for use of the pavement outside for tables and chairs. Review websites indicate that this pub is more suited to seasoned drinkers and caters for its clientele accordingly.

9.13 13. The Ten Tun Tap – No Trip Advisor Rating

The Ten Tun Tap has recently re-opened (2020) having been formerly known as The Cellar Vie Wine Bar. It is now a Craft Ale bar/pub offering a wide range of specialist guest ales. It is located within the Market Square behind the High Street and offers outdoor seating in the summer months. There is no opportunity for further expansion on the site.

9.14 14. The Kings Head – CLOSED Late 2021. No current Trip Advisor rating

The Kings Head is located on Market Street, within Alton's primary shopping area. This pub offered a range of services including a function room, sky sports, outside seating and a dart board. The pub hosted quiz nights and live sporting coverage on wide screen televisions. An extensive area of parking is located to the rear of the pub's plot. ^[1]_{SEP}No recent planning applications have been made to East Hampshire District Council for extension of the property and given the constrained nature of the plot it is unlikely that an extension could feasibly occur.

The pub is currently closed due to unsafe structural issues in the building and is in need of significant investment.

9.15 15. The Hop Poles – CLOSED October 2019. No current Trip Advisor rating

The Hop Poles is located close to Alton town centre and is a Grade II listed property. A small area of parking is located immediately adjacent to the pub and an additional

area of parking is located 40 metres east along Mount Pleasant Road. The pub comprises a large bar area and has outside seating and a wide screen TV for watching live sporting events. In 2011 the pub received permission for the change of use to hotel with six B&B rooms accommodated at first floor. The site is constrained by existing surrounding development and it is unlikely that further extension could occur.

The Hop Poles was previously owned by Enterprise Inns and closed in October 2019 having had three sets of tenant landlords in as many years, none of whom managed to make it a success given the competition from The Ivy House/Wetherspoons, The George and The White Horse – all within 100 metres. The Hop Poles would require a very significant investment to upgrade the interior, upstairs B&B rooms and enlarge the kitchen. In light of the current Covid-19 Pandemic, all hospitality businesses are suffering huge losses and it would be highly unlikely that any pub operators would be willing to invest in such a venture.

10. The business – past and present

10.1 Does the pub management team have local support? Has the team taken steps in the last year or so to try engaging with the local community and has the dialogue affected the way the pub operates?

The Pub is currently closed. Due to the Local market conditions and very strong competition from The Ivy House/JD Wetherspoon, Enterprise Inns (The former owners) decided to dispose of the Property. This has been further compounded by the huge uncertainty in the hospitality industry in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

10.2 Has the pub been managed better in the past? Is there any evidence to support this? Are trading figures available for the last four years and/or from previous management regimes?

Early reviews illustrate that the landlords prior to January 2016 had some popularity until their licence was revoked in January 2016. However, there were many incidences of anti-social behaviour, hence the licence was revoked and the pub closed. Two subsequent tenancies received mixed reviews. No trading figures are available.

10.3 Have there been recent efforts to ensure viability? e.g. has the pub opened regularly and at convenient hours? Conversely, have hours/facilities been reduced?

No, the pub is currently closed. The pub had its late night licence revoked due to anti-social behaviour from patrons

10.4 Has the focus/theme of the pub changed recently?

No, the pub closed in October 2019

10.5 Is the pub taking advantage of the income opportunities offered by serving food? How many times a day is food served? How many times a week?

The property has a history of being “wet led”. The existing kitchen facilities are inadequate to cater for a “food led” approach, and in the current climate, when so many pubs are for sale it is unlikely that pub operators will want to take on a “wet led” premises given the changes to drinking habits. In addition it takes time to establish a reputation for food.

10.6 Are catering facilities being optimised?

The pub is currently closed. Kitchen facilities are inadequate

10.7 Has the rent/repair policy of the owner undermined the Pub’s viability?

Various applications for improvements to the premises have been either granted or refused since 1983.

10.8 Does the pub offer an attractive range of drinks, especially quality real ales?

Historically, The Hop Poles offered a good range of drinks including a limited selection of real ales

10.9 Are there any possible unclaimed reliefs? e.g. where rate abatement is not granted automatically but has to be claimed.

Unknown

11. The sale

11.1 Where and how often has the pub been advertised for sale? Has it been advertised for at least 12 months? In particular, has the sale been placed with specialist licensed trade and/or local agents?

The pub has been on the open market for 15 months being offered for sale by Vail Williams, commercial agents in Woking. Additionally, the property was offered by Homes Estate Agents locally in Alton and widely across their network. The property was listed on multiple websites including Estate Gazette PropertyLink, Rightmove, On The Market, Primelocation and Zoopla

11.2 Has the pub been offered for sale as a going concern?

Yes

11.3 Has the pub been offered at a realistic competitive price? (Information to enable this to be analysed can be obtained from The Publican and Morning Advertiser newspapers and from Fleurets, specialist Chartered Surveyors)

In our opinion, Yes.

11.4 If yes, how many offers have been received?

None for the pub as a going concern and 2 for the pub as a development site.

11.5 Have any valuations been carried out?

Not as far as we are aware.

11.6 Has the pub been closed for any length of time? Is it currently closed?

The Pub has been closed for 17 months

11.7 Does the sale price of the pub, as a business, reflect its recent trading?

Unknown