



Fittleworth Parish Council

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Dear Beverley

I understand that you are currently dealing with a pre-application enquiry concerning the Swan Hotel in Fittleworth and the Parish Council would like to submit their considered views on the current proposals.

As you are no doubt aware, our much-loved village pub has been closed for over two years, and as a village we were beginning to lose hope that it would ever be open again. You may be aware that when the building was put on the market, we had submitted an application for it to be made an Asset of Community Value, but that this was withdrawn when it became clear that the building had been purchased by the current owners with a view to reopening it as a pub and hotel.

The other important bit of background is that we have been in long-term discussions with West Sussex County Council Highways and the National Park about how the area in front of the Swan might be improved so that it reverts to being more of a green space instead of an informal car park. The benefits of doing this are many – it will improve the setting of the Swan and the other listed buildings in this part of the Conservation Area, and it will help to reduce overall speed levels in this part of the village, as drivers will be more easily able to discern that they are entering a rural village.

This project sits within the overall Communities in the South Downs pilot project currently underway by the National Park Authority, and for which Fittleworth is the only West Sussex village.

The Parish Council are therefore supportive in principle of the current proposal to make a small car park in the field near to the Swan, since this will enable the amount of parking for customers outside the pub to be reduced significantly. We understand that the parcel of land where parking is proposed is highly sensitive in landscape, biodiversity, and flooding terms, but we are optimistic that each of these issues can be successfully addressed.

We also think that it is important that the potential for harm arising from this part of the proposals is counterbalanced by the significant benefits that would accrue by the improvement of the small green outside the Swan. We see these two projects as being contingent with each other, and we hope that you would be able to too.

We have been presented the detailed plans for the Swan itself and have met with the new owners and their Architects. It is clear that they are confident about the potential for the Swan to become a significant and viably business, and the Parish Council are glad to see that this is the case.

Overall, we think that the current proposals strike the right balance between allowing the building to house a successful business and being sensitive to the heritage significance of this important listed building. We note that the owners have been speaking to one of our residents, Kate Felus, who in turn has been liaising with Historic England about improving the NHLE listing.

One element of the proposals that we were particularly pleased to see is the replanning of the rear courtyard space, which will be improved by the relocation of external ventilation equipment into a brick 'flue' and the restoration of the barn structure. We think that the removal of the modern timber extension to the front of this building will better reveal the historic significance of the earlier stone

build section to the rear. It is a shame that the improvements to this area necessitate the relocation of the commercial bins to the arch that connects this space to the front, but we understand why it would be necessary to do this. We would however expect the bins to be contained within a well-designed enclosure to minimise any visual harm from the front of the building.

Most importantly, we are happy that the whole building will remain in pub/hotel use, and that the level of investment being made will improve the chances of this being the case for hopefully many generations to come. As noted above, we are also happy to be liaising with the new owners to bring forward much-needed improvements to the area in front of the pub, and hope that the proposals for a new car park can be seen as an important part of achieving that.

We look forward to hearing you considered views on the current proposals, but in the meantime please do let me know if there is anything further, we can be of help with.

Regards,

Rachel Gorvin
Parish Clerk