

517/1307

## Justification for Closure of Public House and Shop.

At

The Thorold Arms,

Marston.

- 1.1 The vacant public house known as the Thorold Arms is on the east side of Main Street and south side of School Lane at the junction where the two roads meet. Marston is a relatively small village with 360 population (2011 Census) and is situated in the south of Lincolnshire, six miles to the north of Grantham and less than 2 miles to the west of the A1.
- 1.2 The Thorold Arms is a late 18<sup>th</sup> early 19<sup>th</sup> century building which has seen many external alterations including brown concrete interlocking tiles, cream rendering and upvc windows. There is a modern bungalow immediately to the east with the Grade 2 Listed School, also to the east, on the opposite side of School Lane. There is a flat roofed extension, with rendering to match the main building, which wraps round the main unit on its eastern side. The intention is to demolish part of this to enlarge the garden area but the roadside element will remain so the appearance from the street remains unaltered.
- 1.3 The existing site is the former public house/restaurant/shop/bed and breakfast with living accommodation. The premises closed in July 2015 and sold at auction year later. As the unit had proved unviable the current proposal was to change the use of the premises into one residential unit thus bringing the premises back into use and enhance the buildings appearance in this prime location at a visually important focal point in the centre of Marston.
- 1.4 The building forms a group with modern two and single storey units around the junction with Main Street and School Lane with as indicated the Grade 2 School to the east and there is an older street edge dwelling with a rendered front situated to the west of the site. There is a distant view above the single storey extension of the spire of St. Mary's Church which is a Grade 1 Listed Building but this view will remain unaltered by the proposals for the conversion of the unit. In general, the group of dwellings, in which The Thorold Arms is set are mainly relatively modern, varying in architectural features and quality and have little impact on the setting of the visually important Listed Building to the east.
- 1.5 The development is for the main part internal alterations to convert the building into one residential unit. There are some rear alterations to

demolish part of the flat roofed area to create a greater garden area and put in patio style doors to serve this part of the garden but there will be no impact on the street scene. On the west of the building it is intended to convert the toilet block into a garage and access and driveway parking will make use of the existing hardstanding and access that exist on this side of the building. The properties adjacent to The Thorold Arms, one of which has a similar street edge location, are for the main part as already indicated are relatively modern and have minimal impact on the setting and appearance of the Listed Building to the east. The Thorold Arms is not listed or within a Conservation Area and with the proposed alterations mainly internal the conversion will have little or no effect on the character of the area or the setting of the Grade 2 School opposite. It is felt that the alterations proposed, by bringing the building back into use, can only enhance the visual appearance of this property in what is a prominent focal point in the street scene to the benefit of the character of the surrounding area and the village of Marston.

- 1.6 As indicated above the pub/shop has been closed for nearly two years with only the Thorold Arms Community Benefit Society Limited (TACBSL) wishing to re-open the premises. The current owner has considered the past history of the premises which has proved to be an unviable operation to the previous owners dating back as far as at least 1992. Therefor the application to convert to a single dwelling would appear to be a reasonable and viable use of the building without having a major impact on the area. The previous planning officer report to committee would appear to support this view and the only reason for refusal for this proposal was that no evidence had been submitted to show that the present use of the property was not viable.
- 1.7 The Parish Council have applied to have the property listed as an asset of community value and this has been confirmed but this again is reliant on the community use being viable and if this is not the case alternative uses can be sort.
- 1.8 The current owner has therefor looked at the only reason for refusal of the previous application and checked back on the past history of the public house and shop to ascertain the viability of the unit. Had this information indicated that this was a viable business then his purchase of the premises may not have gone ahead as the intention was always to covert to residential use to bring the property back into use.
- 1.9 The business history of the pub has been supplied by a previous owner and reads as follows:-

- i) July 1992 the pub was closed as the owner had gone bankrupt and vacated the premises.
- ii) 1992 -2001 The pub was run by John and Janet Bryant who had been in the pub trade most of their lives. In the late 1990's the pub went back on the market as they wished to retire. Mr. Prince was interested in buying the business but only agreed a price below that being asked as in conversation with Mr. Bryant it was established the pub had been trading at a loss and had been supplemented from income from a pension.
- iii) 2001- 2011 Alan Prince ran the pub during this period but has indicated that he was running at a loss of on average £500 a week despite refurbishment and installation of a village shop. Total loss £265k. He sold the pub in 2011 with net profit of £60K meaning an overall loss of £200K. At the time of the sale he had to enter into an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) to pay his creditors.
- iv) 2011-2015 Kim Roberts reopened the pub following refurbishment shortly after the sale from Mr. Prince confident that as a local villager she would be able to run it as a going concern. The pub remained open till 2015 and Mr. Prince is not sure what happened in this period but has indicated that, like himself, she had to enter into an IVA which would seem to indicate that significant losses were once again incurred.

1.10 It is clear from the above information that the use of the premises as a business is not viable and that over a period of at least 23 years the Thorold Arms has failed to be a sustainable business. Unfortunately in small rural communities such as Marston this is situation that is occurring al the time across the country and whilst provision of a community facility is commendable if is not sustainable the chance of failure and large financial cost outweigh the buildings use as a business.

1.11 It is hoped the above points make clear that the building is no longer viable as a public house with shop and that the conversion details as given in the resubmitted Planning Application with the Heritage Statement will be allowed to the overall enhancement of the area.

Note:- The financial details during Mr. Prince's time as landlord could be made available but it is hoped that in view of all the information given this will not be necessary.