



**Abbots Bromley Parish Neighbourhood
Development Plan**

David J Austin
Norfolk House
High Street
Abbots Bromley
Staffordshire
WS15 3BN

05th October 2017

Dear Mr Austin,

Abbots Bromley Village Green – Crown Bank Consultation

I refer to your letter to Councillor Phillip Atkins of 1st October 2017, a full copy of which can be found in Appendix A.

I wish to address a number of points outlined in your letter on behalf of the Abbots Bromley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan Group, which is working as a sub group on behalf of Abbots Bromley Parish Council to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Parish.

Firstly I would make the point that there is not a *proposal* for a change to Crown Bank as you outline. The Neighbourhood Plan group (not the County Council) initiated a conversation regarding Parish wide highway issues, part of which involves the village green area of Crown Bank. The group approached the County Council to ask whether they would support a consultation as part of the Neighbourhood Plan work to look at the highway area of Crown Bank, an area that in places is wider than the main B5014 that runs through the village and serves little other purpose than as a car, van and light commercial lay-by.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) throughout make clear that a central part of developing a Neighbourhood Plan involves consultation and engagement. So far since we began the process of developing a plan in late 2015/early 2016 we have undertaken considerable public engagement on a range of issues, using a variety of different engagement

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methods. The annual event of the Horn Dance Day provides a great opportunity for the group to be visible and available and for the two years that we've run a stall on the day the feedback we have received from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. As I'm sure that you are aware, the Parish Council allows stalls to be provided on the village green as part of the Horn Dance Day celebrations, as in previous years we took the opportunity to make ourselves available. We were not sanctioned by the Parish Council as per your letter, we made an independent decision as a Neighbourhood Plan Group to run a stall.

On the day we provided three different options to look at the Crown Bank Space. The reason for this stems from a previous consultation stage with the community in May 2017 on the proposed plan Vision and Objectives (http://www.abbotsbromley.com/neighbourhood_plan. Click on green "Vision and Objectives – May 2017" drop down arrow for further information)

We made it absolutely clear that the options were provided to start a conversation on the use of the area and were not by any means the only choices available. We also made it clear that there is a "do nothing, leave it as it is" option. We asked people if they would fill out feedback forms to give a sense as to whether any of the options were popular in order to help with the fact finding part of our work, as well as to gain feedback as to the other thoughts and opinions people have. Before filling out a feedback form as far as possible visitors were asked if they are resident of the Parish, the area which represents our legally identified boundary. We are currently in the process of pulling the findings together and a report of the consultation will be added to the Neighbourhood Plan website in due course. Once on the web there will be additional opportunity for comment.

So to recap:

- We are not making a proposal, we are holding a consultation as part of a range of consultations with the community that the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations require us to
- The idea is to improve the balance between public space and vehicular access which at present is almost entirely vehicle dominated. None of the options pursue full pedestrianisation of Crown Bank as indicated in the red text of your declaration, this is clearly misleading; the consultation merely seeks to look at a potentially improved vehicular access/pedestrian balance as described.

We have not made any commitment nor was it identified on any of the plans that any change would automatically and without further consideration be available for the benefit of the Crown Public House. We would not want to see the area changed to facilitate a

“raucous boozers’ paradise” as your intentionally inflammatory rhetoric outlines and I would strongly refute any accusation that this is what we have promoted.

- The drawings provided were indicative, i.e. their purpose is to facilitate a conversation (as made clear on Horn Dance Day). They are not fixed in stone or a “given” as seems to be suggested in your letter and the detail as provided by your declaration as communicated to local residents. The artist’s impressions which show additional street furniture in the area are there to provide a visual interpretation as to how the area *could* look – it is not and never was intended to show a final scheme. This was made quite clear on Horn Dance day but does not, sadly seem to have been made fully clear through your consultation with residents.

Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group give up their time voluntarily to help the community to get a plan in place which will ensure that planning decisions in the future are taken by the community and in the interests of the community. Through looking at issues such as public realm we can also make sure that the communal village spaces are considered both in terms of their purpose and vital heritage, given the conservation area status. The village public spaces and associated use must be considered with the interests of all of the community in mind and this is the balance that we are trying to strike.

We do not and have never sought to do anything that is contrary to the wishes of the village and indeed there are a number of consultation steps, including a referendum on whether the plan should be adopted at the end of the process. Not only has your narrowly distributed communication with immediate Crown Bank neighbours misrepresented the purpose of the Crown Bank consultation in an overtly alarmist manner but it also fails to recognise that members of the community will get ample opportunity to feedback on and ultimately vote on the plan. It is not a case of a scare mongering scenario of “save Crown Bank before it is too late” as your letter heavily implies.

A copy of this letter has been forwarded to those who signed your declaration as we hope that the content sets the record straight on a number of issues and allays any unnecessary fears stoked by your correspondence of some sort of imminent, apocalyptic change to be forced through without further consideration or consultation.

As a group we would be more than happy to meet with you or anyone concerned about the consultation on Crown Bank and would urge you to get in touch. It is noted that to date you have not

approached the Neighbourhood Plan Group directly on this issue before sending your letter of 1st October to the County Council, despite the fact that Cllr Hall spoke to you in person on Horn Dance Day; neither did you choose to raise this with the Parish Council at or before their September 27th meeting for consideration. We would politely suggest that this might, at least initially have proved to be a more constructive course of action in order to outline your concerns rather than opt for disproportionate recourse to potential planning enquires, petitions and letters to Highways. Given the facts rather than hearsay I feel that your approach was simply not necessary and is regrettable at this early, initial engagement stage and could have been better handled through constructive local conversation. Such action and the un-evidenced, highly assumptive tone of your letter may well have unfortunately caused unwarranted anxiety. As alluded to earlier in the letter, the Neighbourhood Plan Team gave up their own time to work very hard in the pouring rain on Horn Dance Day to ensure that those we spoke to were aware that the presented drawings were part of a conversation regarding public realm. I can only hope that the chosen route of your puzzling intervention has not undermined the true purpose of the consultation or the merit of the Neighbourhood Plan amongst the community more widely.

I would once again reiterate that at this stage no scheme has been finally proposed and will not be if it doesn't command community support and yet that's not the impression that your letter suggests. Let's have community dialogue, after all that's the only way in which the Neighbourhood Plan process can be a success and truly reflect the wishes of local people.

We look forward to hearing from you and any local residents that may wish to discuss and engage in the Neighbourhood Development Plan process. It is my understanding that those issues that you raise that are pertinent to both Staffordshire County Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council will be responded to separately.

Please keep up to date through the website and village notice boards on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan, consultations and how to get involved.

I trust that you will make all those across the community that you have already spoken to aware of the matters outlined in this letter as we hope to calm any misplaced concern. I also hope that you receive this letter in the open and constructive manner in which it is intended.

Yours Sincerely,



Cllr Bryn Walters – Chair of the Abbots Bromley Parish Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

C.C:

Cllr Phillip Atkins OBE, Leader - Staffordshire County Council

Cllr Greg Hall – East Staffordshire Borough Council, Bagots Ward

Angela Wakefield – East Staffordshire Borough Council - Legal Services

Mark Parkinson – Staffordshire County Council – Economic Development & Planning Policy Manager

Graham Hunt – Staffordshire County Council – Community Partnerships Officer

Mrs S Meads – Clerk to Abbots Bromley Parish Council

The immediate Crown Bank neighbours who signed Mr D Austin's declaration as identified in the letter of 1st October 2017.

Appendix A - Letter to Councillor Phillip Atkins from Mr D.J. Austin, 1st October 2017.

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1st October 2017.

Dear Councillor Atkins,

Abbots Bromley Village Green – Crown Bank Conservation Area

I am writing to you as my County Councillor with copies to Greg Hall as my ESBC Councillor and also to the Parish Council about the frivolous Neighbourhood Consultation Committee Plans and drawings prepared and funded by the County Council (in supposed times of cutbacks and hardship) for a proposed alteration to Crown Bank, Market Place on Abbots Bromley Village Green right in the middle of The Award-Winning Conservation Area.

My first enquiry is who initiated and who ordered the preparation of these plans and who bore that expense and also sanctioned a stand on Horn Dance Day exhibiting plans and drawings with a printed questionnaire and comment form? This is purely a neighbourhood Plan but the views from the General Public at large (who attended the Horn Dance) were sought alongside residents. Obviously, a biased non-local view could well have been gained on the questionnaires completed and deposited anonymously?

The Village Green is the Centre of the Abbots Bromley Conservation Area, surrounded by Grade 1 and mainly Grade 2 Listed Buildings under the added jurisdiction of English Heritage in addition to the County and District Councils. Any denigration of this area in the way

proposed by the County Council's three published options will be strongly contested, if necessary, at a Public Planning Inquiry. I believe from all my neighbours who surround this area that these proposals trigger their opposition – and are already supported by the signatures of some 22 immediate neighbours. This is without any promotion but with genuine anger at the scurrilous scheme being expensively toyed with.

The proposals consider a reduction of the parking availability on Crown Bank in a Village where parking availability has become critical. Perhaps if this scheme is to be further considered the Crown Public House Car Park in Schoolhouse Lane could be Compulsorily Purchased to provide a much-needed Village Car Park for residents and visitors alike?

Having seen the 3 various options I write to point out that this scheme in any of its alternatives merely enhances the trade and business of The Crown Public House, whilst creating a possible late hour “raucous boozers’ paradise”, attracting not only locals but also additional young boisterous drinkers from the adjacent towns of Rugeley, Uttoxeter and Burton on Trent. Certainly, it would further increase the existing nuisance to adjacent properties surrounding the current (illegal) drinking area on the Village Green which are already contrary to the ESBC bye laws on drinking in the street.

The proposals do not fairly take into account the equality of business interests enjoyed by the other Public Houses – namely: -

- The Bagot's,
- The Royal Oak (Ruchi),
- The Goats Head
- The Coach and Horses

who are all likely to be prejudiced commercially and similarly object to these proposals.

To my knowledge Councillor Hall who manned the Horn Day Stand is a regular customer of the Crown Inn but also has a daughter who is also employed there – I trust that he had already declared his appropriate pecuniary interest under the relevant Local Government Acts?

The plans to enhance drinking outside The Crown currently contravene Section 3(1) ESBC's licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003. In carrying out its duties under the Act, the Licensing Authority as you know should actively promote the licensing objectives, specifically:

- The prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- The prevention of public nuisance, and
- The protection of children from harm

The Crown has a rear garden for drinkers and smokers to use which with a little work could be reinstated to its former glory and would prevent the current nuisance. Instead the licensees encourage drinking outside the front of Crown Inn with a failure to use non-plastic safety glasses. Customers spill onto the road and sometimes tables and chairs occupy and illegally obstruct the highway. The use of the pavement is sometimes impossible. Many noisy nights have been experienced and at least two cars have been damaged outside the Crown by “drunken customers” leaving the premises. All these acts are in contravention of the Licensing Acts, Local Bye Laws and the Highways Acts. This of course should all be enforced by the Local Licensing Authority.

I write now to give advance warning of my own objections to this bizarre idea and on behalf of the persons named (who have all read this letter and agree with it) If this scheme is advanced further.

Yours sincerely,

David J Austin on behalf of 22 immediate neighbours.

- Councillor Phillip Atkins OBE, Staffordshire County Council.
- Councillor Greg Hall, ESBC Borough Council.
- Sarah Meads Clerk to Abbots Bromley Parish Council.
- Residents around the Village Green for information.

The undersigned have all read this letter and agree with its contents. They have signed the following declaration: -

“I wish to object to the application to pedestrianise Crown Bank, Market Place, Abbots Bromley and wish it to remain exactly as it is:”

Hannah & Richard Love, Crofts House, Market Place,

Margaret & Sara Wilkinson, The Maltings, Market Place,

Jo & Ken Okell. The Cross, Market Place

David & June Fleeman Market Place

Cindy & Michael Manners, Market Place

Debra Smith, Cedar Cottage, Market Place,

Erica & Marcus Higgins, Marlborough House, Market Place

Kathleen & Alan Mottram, High Street

David Austin, Meg Hewitt, Norfolk House High Street

Christopher Talbot & Gill Grundy, Rose cottage High Street

Joy Mousley, High Street

Kate & Shan Chettyawardana, Wheelhouse, Bagot Street



SAVE CROWN BANK – KEEP IT AS IT IS!