

3rd October 2017

Dear Mr Austin,

Abbots Bromley Village Green- Crown Bank Consultation

I refer to your letter to Councillor Philip Atkins dated 1st October 2017, which you copied to me as Borough Councillor.

I wish to respond to some of the points outlined in your letter which relate to myself and also to East Staffs Borough Council. Before doing so, I want to clarify the purpose of the event on Horn Dance Day which has caused you so much concern. As you are no doubt aware, Abbots Bromley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group is in the process of producing a Draft Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of Abbots Bromley Parish Council. As you know, I am involved as a volunteer resident member of that group, which is made up of 10 residents of the Parish including 3 Parish Councillors. Each of the members of that group has worked hard over the last year or so to progress towards the drafting of a Neighbourhood Plan. As with any such group, individuals have brought their particular backgrounds to the process. In my case, I volunteered firstly because I want to see Abbots Bromley develop in an appropriate and desirable way and second I felt my experience as a long serving member and recent chairman of ESBC's Planning Applications Committee I have had an insight into how effective Neighbourhood Plans can be when done well (The Local Planning Authority's planning committee being the decision making body which will ultimately have to have regard to an adopted Neighbourhood Plan and its' policies when making future decisions). I had also been involved over a number of years with the drafting of ESBC's Local Plan which was finally adopted 2 years ago in October 2015 and which a Neighbourhood Plan (adopted) sits alongside. Incidentally, when I first got involved with the Local Plan process in 2010 Abbots Bromley was being earmarked for allocations of up to 300 houses. My experience has made me very aware of the potential harm that could occur in future if a Village such as Abbots Bromley doesn't produce its' own Neighbourhood Plan! All that aside, my contribution to Abbots Bromley's process is more in a supportive capacity and it is very clear to me that the group are very much conscious of the fact that a Neighbourhood Plan must be supported by residents. There is absolutely no question of a group attempting to impose its' will on a community.

The consultation event on Horn Dance Day was one of a number of consultations undertaken by the group as part of its engagement with local residents. The subject of Crown Bank is one of the areas worthy of looking at for potential public realm improvement, which the community have asked the group to consider, and so it made sense to consult on this by giving people some indicative ideas as to what may or may not be possible/ desirable, as a conversation starter. It also made sense to do this with reference to Staffordshire County Council who would be a statutory consultee on any proposed Highway alterations aspired to in a Neighbourhood Plan.

It is not the case that any public realm improvement would be solely for the commercial benefit of one business, which appears to be the assumption you have made and which has caused you concern.

Declarations of interest- As set out above, I am a volunteer member of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. As such, I was not acting in my capacity as a Borough Councillor however, if I had been, I would have considered that I had no pecuniary interest to declare. The event I was helping with is simply a consultation and any action flowing from that consultation is not yet known, and in any event it will be some time before any agreed measures are implemented. You mention me being a regular at The Crown. It is well known that I am a regular customer of all the businesses that you refer to, as well as other businesses in addition to supporting organisations in the local community (Church, shop, Royal British Legion, Village Hall etc., and have previously been involved with other groups and organisations such as Scouts & Guides), however, I do currently play for the darts team at The Crown, which is the only men's winter darts team in the village, the team having been based in other pubs in the past, and may do so again in future.

The fact that my daughter has a part-time job at the pub while she is at school is not of relevance to anything being consulted on by the Abbots Bromley Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (even if I were acting in my capacity as Borough Councillor). It is extremely disappointing that you should refer to my daughter, and it is quite unnecessary for you to have done so, and I question your motives for doing so. You are also very well aware that I have another daughter who was until very recently working at the Goat's Head and as a young man I myself worked at The Bagot Arms.

Licensing- It is true to say that the Licensing Authority has power to call for a review of premises licence in circumstances where the Local Authority has evidence showing that one or more of the licencing objectives has been or is likely to be undermined. The Local Authority is not aware of any such evidence in this instance, but Mr Austin if you do have such evidence relating to the Crown then it would be useful if you could share it with the Licensing Authority - or perhaps you may wish to submit your own application for a licensing review which is an option open to any member of the public to do.

I am not aware of the By Laws you refer to.

Other issues raised in your letter to Councillor Philip Atkins are best responded to by him, or Abbots Bromley Parish Council who you also copied in.

I hope you and others will take the opportunity to engage in a positive way with the Neighbourhood Plan process to help produce a positive plan and to try to ensure the future of our treasured rural village and its surrounding areas.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hall

Borough Councillor for Bagots Ward, Deputy Leader for Regulatory Services

Cc

Councillor Philip Atkins- Staffordshire County Council

Councillor Bryn Walters- Chairman, Abbots Bromley Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Mrs S Meads- Clerk to Abbots Bromley Parish Council

22 local residents who signed Mr Austin's Letter