

## **ACV MEETING WITH ROYAL OAK NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTS APRIL 21 2016.**

By invitation I, together with Cllr Miranda Jones, met with a group of approx. 20 residents who live in properties in the vicinity of the “Royal Oak” in order to discuss the Town Council’s April proposal to work with the local CAMRA branch to secure the placement of the Royal Oak on RCC’s Community Asset Register

We made it clear that we were not speaking on behalf of Uppingham Town Council, but in a personal capacity, also stating my membership of Rutland CAMRA.

They are all clearly scarred by the way the pub was run by the previous tenants, citing numerous examples of noise, offensive behaviour and language, particularly in the late evening. They have a very poor, almost non-existent, relationship with the owners (Wellington Pub Company) and have great concerns over the very poor maintenance of the property, citing the example of a chimney fire on a joint chimney due to the lack of sweeping. Attempts by one resident to purchase the property from the owners were met with a blank refusal.

They wanted to know what the process of registering the pub as an “asset of community value” entails. We explained that as this was a joint CAMRA /UTC operation there would be considerable consultation .Before the Town Council would take such a step it would consult widely with the community to ensure the action had broad support. It would need to gather evidence of its community value, and then gain 21 signatures to support the application. The application would then be forwarded to RCC for their consideration.

The example of the “Gate” at Bisbrooke was cited where a community did not support registering it as a community asset, and therefore CAMRA (in this case) took no action.

### **The overwhelming mood of the meeting was**

1) They were **not in favour** of the proposal to put the Royal Oak onto the Community Asset Register. **As it was previously run** they neither considered an asset of the town nor of any community value. They were concerned that their views could be “swamped” by the wider town community.

2) **They recognised that it was a licensed pub, and that there was little they could do to prevent a new person taking up the lease.** Some did not wish to see this at all, but for the remainder, **the main stumbling block was over the late licence granted to the premises** in spite of their protests to the licensing authorities. They believed they did not have a sympathetic hearing by RCC. If this late license could be revoked, they feel there would be a far better chance of an acceptable neighbourhood pub being developed. The late licence encourages a business model focussing on trade after the other public houses had shut, with the inevitable late night noise and nuisance.

They were not aware of the current attempts of a Grantham person to take on the lease, (and whose recent experience of contact with the owners had been similarly difficult)

We suggested

1) That it might be useful if they could establish communication with this potential licensee to outline their point of view regarding the management of this pub in a largely residential area. I agreed to furnish Stewart Brewer, the group's spokesperson, with contact details

2) That they might find it beneficial to act as a group to "force" contact with the owners of the property to outline their concerns over property maintenance and also gain their perspective over the future of the property. As an aside I was able to inform the group that the potential licensee (see above) had been informed that the owners would not wish to sell the freehold for another 3 ½ years. Speculation by the group was this was due to a mortgage position held by the owners. The group believed that over ½ their pub property portfolio was closed as licensed premises

3) That they should make contact with the 3 Uppingham ward county councillors regarding their concerns over the late licence.

We agreed it had been a useful and polite meeting in which all had the opportunity to express their views, and that at times we had "agreed to differ".

Clearly we will remain in touch with the group as necessary.

Cllr David Casewell

Cllr Miranda Jones

22 April 2016