

Lowick & Slipton Parish Council wishes to object to planning application NE/22/00238/FUL:

This is the fifth attempt since August 2019 to change the use of these premises and remove for all times the possibility of the village having a social meeting place. The pub was until recent years, a thriving business attracting customers not just from the village but from the surrounding area, being popular with walkers, and others passing through. The majority, if not all, residents strongly object to the loss of what is the only social gathering place for this community, as the only other public building, the church which has no running water or toilet facilities, lies some way outside of the village along an unlit track and is not suitable for meeting and socialising in the same way as a pub is.

The Samuel Pepys public house is registered as an Asset of Community Value (review/expiry date 01.04.2026) and a community benefit society 'Friends of the Pepys Ltd' is actively working to purchase the premises to run as a community venture, and any delays (an application was made on 10.12.2021 to view the property for the purposes of obtaining a valuation but access to the premises was not made available) and holdups with proceeding with this are not the fault or shortcomings of this group (the group is a member of the Plunkett Foundation and is being supported regarding the process for a valuation and subsequent bidding). The Pepys stands at the centre of the village both physically and emotionally and it is, and will be sadly missed if this development is allowed to proceed.

The premises date back to 1884 and beyond, when it was known as The Red Cow PH, and as the County Archaeological Advisor stated in August 2019 'its significance lies in its role in the community as well as in its historic fabric.' Further, in November 2019 the Senior Conservation Officer for ENC stated that in his/her view 'the building possessed a good level of historical illustrative value, in that it represents a building that is built of local vernacular materials and design. The building also possesses a good level of aesthetic value given its positive contribution to the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider village.' They also noted that the building possesses communal value which is derived from its use as a public house and should be treated as a non-designated heritage asset. The Senior Conservation officer reconfirmed this view in May 2020 quoting paragraph 197 of the NPPF which states that 'the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.' Cllrs feel that this development will not only harm the historic fabric of the premises but also destroy the social spirit of the village. Cllrs are concerned to see that the application includes plans to demolish part of the original structure which will vastly change the street scene, indeed the Senior Conservation officer said in April 2021 that 'the proposed loss of the barn/range on the right hand side of the building would be regrettable' and 'the alteration of the windows and doors on the buildings front elevation is not justified' and that in their view 'this elevation should remain as existing to preserve the building's historic character and appearance.'

There are fears that the proposed vehicle access will cause safety issues on a stretch of road which has experienced several near misses from traffic coming through the village at some speed. In addition Cllrs feel that the provision of only three car parking spaces for a five bedroomed property is insufficient and will result in overflow parking taking place on the road which already suffers, like most villages, from a shortage of parking spaces. Cllrs have concerns that as no off-road turning area

is to be supplied, that vehicles will have little or at least limited sight of traffic coming down the Slipton Lane or turning out of Main Street as they reverse out of the site – the vision splay shown on the location plan does nothing to reassure Cllrs that sufficient views of oncoming traffic will be provided.

The Parish Council again notes, that this application only covers the proposed change of use of the existing building and leaves the garden plot on one side and the car park on the other out of this application, and given that three previous applications (20/00161/FUL, 19/01271/FUL and 20/00997/FUL cover all of these plots the Parish Council strongly suspects that if this application is successful then further applications for the rest of the site will soon follow. The Parish Council still feels that development of the carpark would be unacceptable being surrounded as it by open countryside and therefore outside of the village boundary, and that development of the garden will permanently rule out any possibility for a communal open space in the village, for residents to gather and children to play, as was the custom when the Pepys operated as a community hub, and which Friends of the Pepys Ltd would like to re-establish if they are given a chance to purchase the property as they wish to do.

The previous application 20/01/01706/FUL, dating from January 2021 was refused on the following grounds and as Cllrs can see no material difference between the two applications they therefore urge you to reject this current application

‘The proposal fails to adequately demonstrate that the loss of a community facility is acceptable and that other community uses have been considered as an alternative to the loss – this is contrary to Policy 7c) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and paragraph 83d) of the national Planning Policy Framework 2019.’