

17 December 2014

Mr H Rai  
Melton Borough Council  
Council Offices  
Parkside  
Station Approach  
Burton Street  
Melton Mowbray  
Leics  
LE13 1GH

Dear Mr Rai

We are in receipt of the community right to bid nomination form for The Fox Inn at Thorpe Satchville, and we would like to make sure that you have all the information from our perspective as the owners before making a decision at the meeting on 21 January 2014. First of all we would like to say that it has never been our aim to close The Fox Inn and leave the village without its pub, and I think after reading this letter you will be able to see that is certainly the case.

We bought the pub in the year 2000 and ran it ourselves for just over a year alongside our brewery. Due to the birth of our second child we decided to lease the pub to \*\*\*\*\* who had run it previously. They supplied good affordable pub food and encouraged pub teams such as skittles, darts, petanque and pool. This was at the time when smoking in pubs was allowed and customers travelled to drink at village pubs more readily. However, after two years they decided not to renew their lease due to financial reasons caused by reduction in trade.

At this point in time the pub was marketed, but as no one came forward we felt obliged to step in and run it for seven months, before eventually finding a new tenant. The pub was then leased to \*\*\*\*\* on a ten year lease with the option to renew. \*\*\*\*\* were experienced publicans and restaurateurs, they found business slower to start than they had originally expected in the restaurant, and despite their efforts to make the bar attractive to the villagers it never did very well. Unfortunately for them the recession hit the country and their main food trade reduced to the point where they could no longer afford to stay. When \*\*\*\*\* left, we supported them financially, so that they were not forced to leave having lost everything they had, even though we were not obliged to.

At this point in time we were very concerned that we would not be able to find another tenant so I arranged a meeting with the village hall committee who are the most active group in the village stating our position and asking their advice as to whether the village might like to run it as a community venture. I made it clear that the likely outcome otherwise would be that it would be sold risking it being bought by a developer. We had no response from this meeting, however meanwhile, we once again decided to run the pub for the next three months in an effort to keep it open. We opened every night waiting for village support which was not forthcoming. During this time we approached an agent with a view to selling in the trade but there was no response. Also

during this time we tried very hard to get village trade, delivering several mail shots to every house advertising, pie night, cakes, and guest chef nights.

During this three month period, purely through word of mouth \*\*\*\*\* expressed their interest in the pub. They were confident that they could bring trade to the village having successfully run village pubs and restaurants in the locality. Their plans were to lease the pub from us for two years within which time they had planned to purchase the property. It very quickly became apparent that the trade wasn't as good as they had hoped and once again we had to reduce the rent after a period of approximately three months until they left 18 months later. They had a good reputation for their food and the trade for takeaways was reasonable but there was yet again very little bar trade and hardly any village support. They were quoted as saying 'It's like a pub without a village!'. We would also like to point out that despite other financial problems the tenants would very much have liked to stay in the village but could not foresee any way to do so given the lack of trade. After this we made the decision not to run the pub ourselves again because it has historically lost us money each time we have tried. We therefore discussed our options with Shouler and Son who agreed to market it for us.

With reference to the supporting information for nomination for a community right to bid we would like to comment on each point made:

Firstly, we agree that The Fox is the only pub in the village, but need to point out that most pub-goers in the village quite happily frequented The Saddle in Twyford when our pub was open and therefore question that they have nowhere to go in the parish of 'Twyford and Thorpe Satchville' to maintain their social interests. We would also like to point out that there is a village hall in Thorpe Satchville which we understand has been used for some bar nights since. Secondly, we have discussed the 'people who left for financial reasons' above, which was affected badly by lack of trade as pointed out in the previous paragraph. Thirdly and fourthly, the pub has been advertised in the trade in previous years and this time it was marketed on the advice of Shouler and Son who are very knowledgeable about business and the locality. Fifthly, we have shown that we have consulted a group of parishioners who failed to respond with any interest. We have also told parishioners on several occasions that we were not going back to run the pub if it failed this time, and that they would be at risk of losing their pub if they did not use it. Lastly, we are surprised and fail to understand where 129 signatures have appeared from. We know from our own experience and from that of our last tenants that only a handful of villagers used the pub on a regular basis, and many other frequent the Saddle at Twyford instead.

We hope that you will give the content of this letter due consideration when deciding whether to give the village a community right to bid.

Yours sincerely

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