

Chris Thompson
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Dear Mr Thompson

Summercross Public House, Otley

Thank you for your letter of the 30th November 2007.

However I am very concerned to see that it contains a number of inaccuracies, and I am writing to you as a matter of urgency because it seems that you have been misled about some details the Summercross, which of course is a very serious matter and one that will concern you greatly.

First of all, it is factually incorrect to say that "trade had been declining". In fact, the previous Landlord had turned the pub around after it had been run down by previous owners and was steadily increasing both custom and trade. So you have been misled on this point.

Much more seriously, you have suggested that "the tenant had not looked to extend his lease which was due to expire". This is absolutely untrue and it should be a matter of huge concern that you had been given factually incorrect information as part of the process of your purchase of the pub. The fact is that Mr & Mr Mills had sought to renew their lease, but this was refused. When it was clear that Phase 7 Properties had no intention of renewing their lease, and that the pub would be 'sold over their head', Mr & Mrs Mills decided to leave at the end of October. But you need to be clear, Mr & Mrs Mills did want to continue to run the pub and was forced out, against his and the wishes and customers.

So I suggest to you, as a matter of great importance, that you look into this with some urgency for it seems clear that you have been misled and this is a very serious matter as part of a commercial sale.

You also mention your valuation report and its contents. It is quite correct that there has been changes of ownership which indeed have affected the trade of the pub, but Mr & Mrs Mills were expanding the business and starting to make a return from their hard work and investment, so this should have been reflected in the current position of the pub..

You also mention your inspection of the premises and I would challenge your findings. The building was extensively refurbished about ten years ago by Cutlers (when they purchased the Summercross and turned it into a pub-restaurant). The equipment is only three years old and the Summercross has the necessary environmental health certificates from Leeds City Council for the preparation of food. I also have spoken to other pub operators who are well known for food and they are firmly of the opinion that the Summercross is a viable prospect for a pub well regarded for its food, as of course it was a few years ago until the then owners hiked up the rent.

In terms of the beer cellar, the standard must be high as the Summercross was awarded the Casque Mark accreditation by the Cask Marque Trust and the Black Sheep Flagsheep award for the high standard of its Beers. The pub was also awarded Leeds CAMRA most improved pub of the season. So the picture you are painting is simply not an accurate one. I also know that the landlord wished to make further improvements to the Summercross but lacked the certainty of his lease to do so as well as the support (unsurprisingly considering their intentions) from the owners in doing this.

Finally, you suggest there is an overprovision of pubs in Otley. That is your personal view, but not one shared by many people in the town and certainly has no relevance to the prospect of development on the site. However, this opinion misses the point indeed disguises the fact that the location of the Summercross (and the car parking) means that the pub is not in direct competition with the town centre pubs and it attracts a different clientele. It is the only pub on the East of Otley, hence its importance to the community there.

I appreciate you giving me an idea of your intentions for the pub. However, you must already be aware that the community of Otley opposes the loss of this pub and any development on the site, so if you intend to carry on with your plans, you will be doing so against the express and public wish of the community here. You say in your letter "I feel that the development proposed will enhance the area generally and trust that the local community will support this". As I think you already know, the community disagrees with you on the first point and therefore you most certainly will not get the support of the community. May I remind you that the following all support the retention (and therefore now re-opening) of The Summercross as a Public House and oppose development on the site: -

- Otley Town Council
- All 3 Otley & Yeadon Leeds City Councillors
- Otley's MP
- Otley Town Partnership
- Otley Chamber of Trade
- Otley Conservation Task Force
- South East Otley Residents Association

So I would sincerely hope that, considering the reputation of Chartford Homes that you are keen to portray, and the fact that you have clearly been misled about the viability of the Summercross Pub, that you would not wish to continue with this project against the wishes and Otley and its representative organisations and elected representatives.

You are keen to say that Chartford Homes are dedicated to conservation, therefore I would ask you to show a commitment to genuine conservation and sell this site to someone who is prepared to maintain it as it is and has been for years including reopening the pub to serve the local community.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Greg Mulholland
MP for Leeds North West