

Horsham Society

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Is pub closure a wake up call?

Are the thousands of extra homes north and west of Horsham going to ensure that Horsham retains its shops, restaurants, pubs and theatre or are they under threat regardless?

The recent applicants wishing to convert the Queen's Head in Queen Street, Horsham, totally to residential, do not expect any increase in demand.

Rather than anticipating a vibrant redeveloped Pirie's Place to attract more people to the town, in their application they blame Pirie's as likely to attract any customers that there might be away, and use this in the justification for switching from reopening the Queen's Head to conversion to flats.

The Queen's Head and its related buildings stand on the junction of New Street and Queen Street. New Street is an old Horsham town road known as Pest House Lane in the 18th century. The two buildings either side of the entrance to New Street dating from around 1830 provide evidence of the road's age.

Pest House Lane was so called because further up the road was the Pest House



The Queen's Head pub in Queen Street, pictured in 2016.

where sick people were taken, so that their infections did not spread.

In 2015 an application was made to demolish the old buildings along New

Street belonging to the brewery and make changes to the Queen's Head itself. At the time I was a councillor who represented this area and I was persuaded to support the application on the basis that it would allow the pub to continue.

Sadly, now the old buildings have been demolished the plan to reopen the pub has been dropped.

Horsham Society wishes to see life return to Queen Street, not its slow decline. We are encouraged by proposals to restore the dilapidated Antix building, retaining its architectural relationship with the adjacent buildings.

We appreciate that Horsham District Council acknowledge that this is one of the main entrances to the town and plans improvements; that they recognise that this is an area where smaller shops can provide a valued alternative to the usual high street retailers.

Conversion of the pub to residential will not help.

This part of Horsham relatively recently also lost the Tanners further east along the Brighton Road. Further along we have the now much used Tesco shop, once a pub, and further out still the Dunn Horse

now surely lost at Mannings Heath. These pubs, while perhaps not a favourite with everyone, meant a great deal to many; were an important part of their social life.

At least from the point of view of the appearance of the area there are some things to be thankful for. The old Tanners public house looks most attractive and what was once the Feathers opposite New Street is looking very smart with its sign marking where the pub used to be. The new houses where the dairy used to be, although of modern design, fit in pretty well and improve the appearance of the road.

The change of mind of the brewery is very hard to take. We must hope that Horsham District Council planners will do what they can to resist a gradual conversion from retail to residential and a shrinking of the town in towards its centre.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 259038.