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Mr Andrew Kinghorn - Barrister
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6 July 2017

Dear Mr Kinghorn

Horse and Groom (H&G) Woodgreen – ACV Review

I refer to your email of 26th June 2017 and attachments, which were discussed at the parish council meeting on Tuesday 4th July 2017, and I am therefore replying on the council's behalf.

Firstly, we would like to point out that the ACV nomination only includes the land and buildings currently being used by the village pub in its trade and not the field referred to in Freeths letter of 16th June 2017. I attach a photo taken on 29th June from The Alley looking NNE towards Forest End Cottage and Red Cottage, showing the boundary fence between the field(s) on the right and the pub garden with some of its seating and umbrellas on the left. Any separate plans the owner has for the field(s) would of course be a matter for the New Forest National Park Authority's planning department and their local plan and not the NFDC, but the nomination did not include that land.

Secondly, with regard to providing more evidence for the nomination, in addition to the parish council listing the pub as a valued facility on its website, the H&G plays an enormous role in the social life of the community. For the past fourteen years the pub has hosted the Horse and Groom Gentlemen's Society (HAGGIS) dinners on the first Monday of the month. These are attended by men principally from Woodgreen and in addition to its normal function have also raised several thousand pounds for local and national cancer charities. The Monday night was chosen to boost takings for the pub on what might otherwise be a quiet evening. Due to the success of HAGGIS, a monthly Ladies Night soon followed which is normally held on the third Thursday of each month, again attended mainly by ladies from the village. I attach a photo of a notice board in the H&G on Friday evening (30th June) advertising Ladies Night and a joint BBQ in the pub's garden.

The garden with its play area is also a big asset for the community as not only does it provide a safe haven for local families to use licenced premises in summer, but it hosts BBQs as evidenced above, an annual beer festival in August and has been the venue for music events, local weddings and birthday parties. Marquees are often erected to ensure that the events are not weather affected.

The H&G has always offered great food and a weekday pensioner's menu so that old and young in the community can mix. Recently, on the last Friday of each month a theme evening of foreign cuisine takes place. So far we have had Thai, French, Italian, Mexican (June) and next month it is the turn of the USA.

These are good opportunities for the local community to come together. The nearest alternative mentioned in Freeths letter is 0.9 miles away, on a busy "A" road and accessed from Woodgreen along an unlit country lane with no pavement and there is no public transport to and from the village.

The village pub, car park and garden are on level ground offering good access for disabled and elderly customers from the community. The H&G takes part in raising money for local charities with draws, etc. particularly around the Easter and Christmas periods and collection boxes throughout the year. On New Year's Eve it is the focal point of the community's celebrations with a dinner attended by locals and usually an Irish band providing the entertainment. On a more sombre note the H&G also provides a base for families to congregate for the wake after a funeral service at the village church, just 50 yards away.

As far as games and sports are concerned, the H&G has a darts team in the local league, and as the Woodgreen cricket team do not have licencing at their pavilion, after their matches in summer they have a drink with the away team visitors in the village pub. There is currently no quiz team but the licensees have been holding quiz nights for local teams.

Finally, Freeths letter seems to want to know how the parish council would propose purchasing the business, but this would only be in the event of the owners not wishing to sell the premises as a going concern. When the village last answered a general survey, it was established that the four most valued community assets were the shop and post office, the pub, the village hall and the church. Shortly afterwards, the proprietors of the village shop wished to retire and close the business permanently, but the community rallied and through grants and local activities, many being held at the H&G, raised sufficient funds to secure the future of the shop and post office for the foreseeable future. The council feels that should the same situation arise with the village pub, the community should be given the opportunity to secure its future in a similar way. Of the 410 responses to the survey mentioned above, 345 cited the H&G as being an important asset for the village.

The parish council therefore very much hope that you will give your support to the Horse and Groom, along with its current car park and beer garden, remaining as an asset of community value for all the reasons expressed above and because it adds so much to the wellbeing of the village.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes.

Mrs V Eden – Parish Clerk