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Item No: 7.2

Application: 180874

Applicant: Mr Karl O'Brien

Agent: Mr Robert Pomery

Proposal: Demolition of former public house and erection of 4no. dwellings and car parking.

Location: The Langenhoe Lion, Mersea Road, Langenhoe, Colchester, CO5 7LF

Ward: Mersea & Pyefleet

Officer: Chris Harden

Recommendation: **REPORT FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

1.0 Reason for Referral to the Planning Committee

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee for information purposes only further to the deferral of the application from the 31st January Committee meeting for a month to allow the potential of a community use on the site (i.e. ground floor shop in one unit) to be explored.

2.0 Synopsis

- 2.1 Since the deferral of the application, Abberton Parish Council have submitted a business plan to the Borough Council and to the applicant's agent relating to a community shop on the ground floor of plot 1 of the proposed 4 dwellings. The applicant's agent has indicated that there could be potential for the scheme to be viable and draft layout plans have been submitted. A reconsultation will be required so this report is for information only as an update to the application.

3.0 Details of potential Community shop

- 3.1 Since the deferral of the application, Langenhoe and Abberton Parish Council (ALPC) have submitted a business plan to the Borough Council and to the applicant's agent relating to the provision of a ground floor shop unit on Plot 1 which is at the Northern end of the site. The Parish Council "submits an alternative proposal to establish a small community village shop...with a parking area behind and additional street parking in the unrestricted Fingringhoe Road."

- 3.2 The Parish Council states:

"To provide evidence to support the proposal, ALPC carried out a questionnaire survey delivered to all 450 residences within the villages during the first week of February 2019. Of the 126 responses received from residents, either in hard copy or to a dedicated email address, 124 (99.2%) supported the proposal and stated that they would use the shop, 74 volunteered to work there and 55 volunteered to join the project team. Given this level of support, ALPC voted unanimously to progress the alternative proposal, at a meeting of the Parish Council held on 18 February 2019. ALPC also voted unanimously in support of the principle of providing financial support to assist in setting up such a community shop. Several local residents have stated recently that they would give a donation towards setting up a Community Shop. In addition, strong support to the proposal has been received from Fingringhoe Parish Council, Winstred Hundred Parish Council (neither of which communities have a village shop) and from West Mersea Town Council...."

3.3 The Parish Council adds:

“The aims of the community shop are to:

- maintain the product range of most convenience shops including general groceries and essential household goods locally sourced fresh produce.
- provide a central location for other local villages lacking similar resources.
- become a central location for the provision of essential Post Office services.
- provide a welcoming community hub for the village, to reduce social isolation (especially for the elderly).
- give general support – for example: to display and offer for sale work by local artists.

3.4 In terms of structure and Governance, the Parish Council state:

“The Community Shop will take a long-term lease of the ground floor of the northern terrace house including the garden portion which will be used for car parking. The legal entity for the new venture is Abberton and Langenhoe Community Shop Limited (ALCSL), which will be registered with the Financial Conduct Authority as a Community Benefit Society under the terms of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. ALCSL has adopted the model rules provided by the Plunkett Foundation, which supports community enterprises. Local people will be invited to become Members of ALCSL by subscribing to a Community Share Issue. Each Member will subscribe for one or more shares, priced at, for example, £25 each, but will only have one vote. The typical community shop with a structure similar to the one adopted here has nearly 200 Members and we anticipate this will be easily achieved in Abberton and Langenhoe.”

- 3.5 The Parish Council have presented the business plan to the applicant's agent who has initially considered there may be potential for the scheme as it could be close to a commercial bid that would not have to be heavily subsidised by the applicant. Accordingly the agent has submitted an initial draft revised scheme showing one ground floor shop unit and two parking spaces to the rear. This revised scheme will need a full re-consultation and assessment of any responses received.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 That Councillors note the updated position of the application.