

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. I am the chairwoman of the Hatcham Conservation Society, which is where the White Hart pub lies. We object to the planning application submitted by the Wellington Pub Group and ask the inspector to uphold Lewisham council's initial decision to reject the application. The Hatcham Conservation Society is a relatively new society, formed last year. But I have been living in New Cross Gate for the past ten years and I recognise the positive, community-minded changes that the current owners of the White Hart pub have brought to the local area. The Montague Arms, The Duke of Albany Pub in New Cross, are two much loved pubs which have closed down in the local area in recent years. The closest pub to the White Hart, the Five Bells, was taken over by a chain last year, sucking out any character and community value last year. There is a disturbing trend in London where developers have been allowed to close London's much loved pubs through encroaching developments.

I would like to make participants aware that the Hatcham Conservation Society has submitted an Asset of Community Value bid on the 7th September 2020 with a decision by November 2nd. The ACV essentially allows local residents and amenity societies, of which the Hatcham Society is one, to protect much-loved community venues.

I am confident that the bid will be successful, I collected testimonies from 21 locals who told me about the positive community benefits the pub brings to this corner of New Cross Gate.

This bid application should be considered as a material planning consideration during this inquiry given its high chance of success. The pub contributes to the local community in multiple ways, as highlighted in the 21 testimonies submitted as part of the ACV bid. This is unique compared to the other pubs near by which are predominantly gastropubs with no character and community feeling within. As Chair of the Hatcham Society, we recognise the immeasurable social good that the White Hart pub and the current publicans offers to the residents of Hatcham and the wider New Cross Gate area. Both locally and nationally, public houses which enhance the social wellbeing of residents have been recognised as valuable community assets.

I ask the inspector to uphold the council's planning decision for the White Hart because the venue will no longer be "tenable" for the current owners if the upstairs are converted into flats. The White Hart in its current form successfully tackles feelings of loneliness for many local residents.

The occupiers of the White Hart have offered free weekly meals to destitute individuals living nearby during the coronavirus pandemic. The owners of the pub have given out meals outside

All Saint Church (I said st James in the speech..) in Hatcham which I have witnessed. This shows the positive social impact that the current occupiers of the pub have offered to the local community, highlighting the community value that the pub offers. No other pubs in New Cross have offered this.

This is not the only charitable cause that the pub has championed in the recent past but before lockdown they hosted an amateur dog show where money was raised for Battersea dogs home. The publicans play an active role in trying to combat social issues and their continued efforts to support local people and London charities should see this appeal rejected.

The pub offers weekly cultural events such as live Irish folk music. By allowing locals to immerse themselves in music from outside of England, the pub has allowed a greater understanding of different cultures which fosters a greater respect for others and their histories. These folks sessions see locals - both old and young - mingling with each other. Opportunities for intergenerational mixing is sadly rare in the UK with very few venues remaining which allows this to happen. These weekly sessions cement the pub's title as a community pub to be projected.

The pub also hosts a weekly pub quiz where people can mingle and make new friends, especially with people they wouldn't have met otherwise. One testimony spoke of how they met one of their closest friends thanks to the pub quiz.

The White Hart also hold regular music nights ranging from jazz to dj sets. These events bring the community together, allowing people to mingle with others they may not have met otherwise. The events are well curated and entertaining with a variety of local musicians performing. The pub gives younger or starting-out musicians a platform they would otherwise not have been afforded and these events are fun. London has witnessed large swathes of live music venues closing down in recent years to make way for new housing developments and the White Hart should not be the next victim. The White Hart is a safe and welcoming venue for performers and guests alike, demonstrating that the current pub must be protected.