

Walworth Society Objection to Planning Application 23/AP/0481 for The Beehive Public House (62 Carter Street SE17 3EW). Proposal: Change of use from ground floor Public House (Sui Generis) to 1 x self-contained flat (Use Class C3) including associated amenity space and refuse storage; removal of door and insertion of window to front elevation.

The Walworth Society objects to this application. The grounds of this objection are listed below.

1. Planning Policy – Support for the retention of public houses. Pubs are the subject of Policy 42 of the adopted Southwark Plan 2022. This asserts (inter alia) that:

- Pubs must be protected from development resulting in a change of use or loss of the pub.
- The registration or nomination of a pub as an Asset of Community Value will be treated as a significant material consideration
- In exceptional circumstances, development proposals resulting in the loss of a pub will only be permitted where there is no market demand for the pub use. This needs to be demonstrated by a marketing exercise for two years, immediately prior to any planning application, for both its existing condition and as an opportunity for improved pub use at market rates.
- The reasons for this policy are cited as:

1. Pubs make a strong contribution to the historic character and social fabric of an area, particularly through their architectural features and historical and cultural connections. Pubs also make a strong contribution to Southwark's vibrant and diverse night-time economy. The number of pubs across London has been declining and they are at risk of conversion or demolition. Southwark has lost a third of its pubs in the period 2007-2017, this represents 79 pubs lost in the borough with 164 public houses remaining. A number have changed into other commercial uses and have lost their appearance and usage as a public house. Nevertheless, there is still a market for pubs given the right management and sales offer.

2. Pubs provide a positive economic role in contributing to the vibrancy and vitality of shopping areas. Pubs that have been designated as Assets of Community Value are recognised by local residents and the council as having an important place and role within our communities.

Overall, this is a strong presumption in favour of retaining pubs and especially those with a successful Asset of Community Value listing. The details of the Beehive PH listing are outlined in detail in point 2 below. It is clear from both policy P42 of the 2022 Southwark Plan and the reasons for the policy that the acceptance of the Beehive PH as an ACV is a significant indication of the importance of this pub in the local area as a local amenity, the role that it plays for the local community and the clear desire of local people for it to be retained as a pub.

2. The Beehive is currently designated as an Asset of Community Value. The Beehive PH in Carter Street is identified as a successfully nominated Asset of Community Value (ACV) by Southwark Council (<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/5981/Copy-of-Successful-nominations-List-of-assets-of-community-value-2-February-2021.xlsb>). The Beehive was originally accepted as an ACV by Southwark Council on 9th September 2015. The ACV listing was then confirmed again on 5th October 2020 and the current listing runs until 4th October 2025.

The grounds that the society made for the Beehive to be made an ACV are outlined below and chime extremely strongly with the rationale for policy P42 of the adopted Southwark Plan 2022.

The grounds for its significance (that were set out in the successful ACV application) are:

In terms of its **uses**, the Beehive is extremely important to the life and soul of West Walworth and the wider Walworth area in general combining as it does:

- The Beehive is a focus for community life in West Walworth. People feel safe there and are happy to go there alone; it has a friendly feel with a mix of drink and high-quality food.
- People like the fact that it combines an historic setting with a pleasant atmosphere.
- This sense of coming together is also associated with its location at the crossroads of a number of destinations and routes across West Walworth. Again, its success and value are linked to its capacity to be a central location that people are naturally drawn to in order to meet and socialise.
- It is an important pub and social space in an area that has lost many other pubs in recent years.
- The Beehive is important in an area that is principally residential in nature and has a shortage of focal points for its social and communal life.
- It is a community hub which welcomes people from diverse backgrounds.
- It is a focal point for the local area and animates the public realm in both summer and winter when it is busy and full of people enjoying themselves.
- In essence the Beehive is the community heart of the surrounding area. Although there are other pubs in West Walworth, there are none close to the Beehive and the Beehive is situated amongst extremely dense residential housing which is largely made up of Council Estates.
- It is a place that is sufficiently friendly and relaxed that people can form friendships with other people who go there.
- The pub plays an important role for local organisations. Again, in an area where venues are few on the ground, the Beehive offers an appropriate semi-formal character which is appropriate for organisations to make use of for meetings, other gatherings and social events associated with their businesses.
- The Beehive has a good layout as a building which allows for flexible uses whether people are coming for a drink singly or as a group. This is useful in an area where people do not necessarily have much space where they live as is the case in West Walworth. Newington ward (which the Beehive sits in) has extremely high residential densities (per hectare) that are significantly above the Southwark and London averages.
- There is a significant contrast between the Beehive and other Walworth pubs with the Beehive having a more intimate atmosphere and meeting a local need that no other venue does across the Walworth area.

It is **architecturally and historically significant** owing to:

- The land around the current pub was originally market gardens. Some of Walworth's Gardens were pleasure grounds for local public use and that of visitors from the centre of the city eg Beehive Tea Gardens and Montpelier Tavern and Tea Gardens. The presence of a pub in this area goes back to the late 18th Century.
- The history of cricket owes a significant debt to the area as the Montpelier Cricket Club, one of the strongest clubs in South London in the early 19th Century used the Beehive Grounds until new building encroached to such a degree that the acquisition of these grounds left the Montpelier Club without premises. Land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall at Kennington Oval was then found for the purposes of building a new cricket ground and a cornerstone of English cricket was born in terms of the Oval Cricket ground and the Surrey County Cricket Club.
- The pub remained intact through the almost total redevelopment of the area after the Second World War and the creation of the Penrose Estate from the remnants of Carter Street.

3. Southwark Council Article 4 Directions. Underscoring the significance of the Beehive is its presence in the list of pubs that were identified by Southwark Council in 2017 and the withdrawal of the permitted development rights associated with the change of use, demolition and alteration of public houses in Southwark. The Beehive is identified as an Open Pub where the permitted development rights relating to change of use and alteration have been withdrawn (<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/2822/Schedule-of-pubs-in-Southwark-.pdf>)

4. The marketing of the property. Southwark Plan Policy P42 states that in exceptional circumstances development proposals resulting in the loss of a pub will only be permitted where there is no market demand for the pub use. This needs to be demonstrated by a marketing exercise for two years, immediately prior to any planning application, for both its existing condition and as an opportunity for improved pub use at market rates.

In the submission the applicant asserts that this marketing exercise has occurred. We strongly refute the assertion that the marketing exercise has in anyway complied with the terms of the policy as a) the marketing exercise occurred in the past and has not occurred immediately prior to this application, b) the exercise has not occurred at a level that could attract offers for the business, c) there has been no open dialogue with the freeholder such that offers could have been accepted – the owners have been unavailable to engage with anyone who has expressed interest in the site and d) the freehold has not been advertised.

More specifically in relation to the marketing of the property and the points made in the applicant's planning statement (sections 5.2.12 to 5.2.22), we state:

1. In relation to the letter of Guy Simmonds of 12th October 2022 (part of the planning statement Appendix 1) the property was marketed between July 2018 to February 2020. This period is not immediately before this application (as required in Policy P42 of the adopted Southwark Plan).
2. In relation to 5.2.19 and the statement that the marketing of the available lease at £175,000 (20 years) or £55,000 (10 years) does not seem an unrealistic asking price, we would state that the detailed market appraisal valuation report undertaken in February 2022 by the experienced pub valuation expert

MJD Hughes Ltd on behalf of the Walworth Community Pub indicates that this is not a realistic asking price and that the leasehold value is in the range of £40,000-£50,000. With the condition the site is likely to be in (we understand that the kitchen needs a complete refit), the market value is likely to be at the lower end of this range.

3. At 5.2.21 and 5.2.22 of the planning statement, it is asserted that there are a number of other public houses close to the application site and that, as a result, there are plenty of other venues and the impact on the local community will be minimal. As well as being the opposite of the pub's value as identified in the ACV submission, this fundamentally misses the point of different pubs that serve different demographics. Southwark has lost many pubs in recent years. Losses locally include The Mason's Arms, The Sir Robert Peel, The Beaten Path, The Hampton Court Palace, The Duke of Sutherland, The Giraffe and many more. Other pubs are currently closed or at risk. This fits with a trend in Southwark. Southwark has seen a reduction in pubs of 23% over 20 years and 50 fewer in actual numbers of pubs. There are 5.4 pubs per 10,000 people in Southwark. This is below the national average of 5.8. Although new drinking establishments have opened, these are mainly not pubs and do not cater for the core demographics of the Walworth area.

Several of the sites noted above are not pubs (The Lowlane Taproom, Orbit Taproom, The Tap Inn – but licensed café/brewery tap/sports bars). Neither does the above take into account the long, unique history of The Beehive PH in the area. Crucially, and as we have outlined in relation to the ACV listing, the Beehive is the only one of the pubs cited to offer a genuine community space, welcoming families and a wide range of demographic groups, in a bright comfortable space with a well-loved outdoor area. It is very different to the drinking pubs of East Street and the Walworth Road, and also still more of a pub than food-led offers such as the White Bear and Mansion House.

In short, there is a need for The Beehive in an area that has been losing its pubs and where the remaining pub offers to not serve the whole community.

4. More generally, the owners have been unavailable to engage with anyone who has expressed interest in the site. Neither has the freehold ever been advertised.

5. Local need - growing population; high population density. This element of need is highlighted further by the recent 2021 Census results which in relation to population density (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/population-density/population-density/persons-per-square-kilometre>) show the two closest Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs) as having extremely high population density with the Newington, Kennington East and Walworth West MSOA having a density of 20,540 persons/km² and Walworth North MSOA 16,725 persons/km². This and the construction of a number of new housing developments locally (inc. Manor Place depot, William Cuffay House, Rutley Close along with significant sites on Braganza St and Manor Place Terrace) show a high and increasing demand for leisure amenities amongst a growing local population.

6. The Heritage of the Beehive PH. We assert that the February 2023 Heritage Statement wholly undervalues the heritage of the building both in its built form and its cultural significance. In terms of the building, the Beehive PH sits within the Sutherland Square Conservation Area. We note in relation to the Southwark Council Local List consultation that there are three comments in favour of the Beehive PH being locally listed including support for its Age and Rarity, Aesthetic Value and Landmark Status, Group Value and Historic, Evidential, Communal and Social Values.

A. Architectural value. The architectural interest and value of the building is described as follows:

- The current building is a two-storey pub built in c1840-1850 and is one of only a few surviving public house buildings in the borough from this early era of Southwark's development.
- The ground floor pub front has polished granite pilasters with Corinthian capitals.
- The first floor is faced with stock brick with stucco architraves to the window openings and a stucco cornice band and blocking course.
- It is delightfully modest in scale and is of a similar age to the terraces on Carter Street a few meters to the west which are already on the draft local list.

B. Cultural heritage and value. Furthermore, in terms of its cultural heritage, we set out the story of this building and a pub in this location as follows in order to make clear: a) its historical and cultural significance in and to the local area, b) the longevity of its presence and c) the stories and life that has surrounded a pub known as the Beehive in this location for well over 200 years.

- The pub holds a particularly important place in British sporting history, as cricket was played there from the late 1700s. The Montpellier Cricket Club was founded in 1797 and initially played its home matches at the Montpellier Tea Gardens. In 1827, a publican called John Bryant took over the Beehive and had set up his own cricket ground next to the pub. Just a few years later in 1831, the Montpellier Club moved down the road to the Beehive Ground. They stayed here till 1844 when the land was sold for housing schemes, including that of the nearby Sutherland Square.
- Cricket was not the only sport at the Beehive. Archery competitions were being held as early as 1839 and pigeon shooting matches were also common. The accuracy of those participating was not always great: in 1834, a journeyman shoemaker called John Phillips was shot in the arm, side and face whilst walking past the Beehive when a shooting match was going on.
- In the mid-nineteenth century, the now largely forgotten sport of pedestrianism became hugely popular. Initially beginning with members of the aristocracy betting on races between their footmen, pedestrianism developed into a major sport. There are many reports of these races taking place at the Beehive in the 1840s and they often attracted crowds of 3,000 or more. Running races were also held there. One Saturday in April 1845, a renowned runner named George Sherrin took part in a 440-yard hurdles race – against a horse. Though Sherrin had started well, the horse – Bob – soon took the lead but then refused to jump one of the hurdles, allowing the human to win.
- Prior to the establishment of public mortuaries and coroners' courts in the late 19th century, many inquests were held in local pubs. It is believed that this was because they were large enough to accommodate the coroner and jury but also would usually have a table large enough to display a body. The Beehive was no exception and in January 1857, the pub was used in the inquest of a terrible double murder where two young children, Edwin Fuller Bacon aged 3 and his infant sister, Sarah Ann, had been murdered by their mother who had recently been released from St Luke's

Asylum. Inquests were being held here at least until 1881 when it hosted an inquiry into a fatal fire at 96 Walworth Road in which four people had died.

- It was the meeting place for many clubs and organisations which flourished in Victorian London. In March 1878, a meeting of the Excelsior Lodge of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes took place. The 'Buffs', as they were known to members, were a fraternal organisation started in London in 1822, to provide philanthropic and charitable assistance to its members and the local community. In February 1885 up to 40 members of the Walworth and Newington Branch of the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society held a dinner at the pub.
- One of the most bizarre sights ever witnessed by the regulars occurred in September 1837 when a monkey parachuted onto land next door to the pub. This was part of Mrs. Graham's spectacular balloon show at the nearby Surrey Zoological Gardens. The unfortunate creature was dropped in a small cage from around one hundred feet in a primitive parachute but had been blown off course when it had not opened properly. The monkey may have been the famous 'Signor Jacopo' who was a veteran of over 200 parachute jumps. Astounded drinkers in the Beehive would not only have had the rare sight of a parachuting monkey but the lucky finder would receive a reward of £2 and free admission to the Surrey Zoological Gardens.
- One of the darkest days in the history of the Beehive was on 23 June 1944. The citizens of Walworth had suffered greatly during the blitz but after D-day you could perhaps excuse them for thinking that the worst was over. At 02:28, Carter Street was shaken by a massive explosion. A V1 flying bomb had hit demolishing at least five houses and causing severe blast damage to many other properties in the surrounding streets. Ten people died in this incident and many more would have been injured. This was the first of six V1 flying bomb attacks on Walworth between June and August 1944. The pub survived with minor damage.

It is clear from this and the earlier comments that have been made in relation to the value of the Beehive to the local community (in reference to the ACV listing) that this pub has a remarkable heritage and community value that would be expunged if this application was permitted.

7. Summary of objection.

The society could not object more strongly to this application and believes that this is another opportunistic application seeking to overcome the strong desire that Southwark Council has to protect the remaining pubs in the borough and the desire of local people for the Beehive to be retained at the heart of our community. We believe that no case has been made for the long-term lack of viability of the pub; in fact, the applicants were until recently been asserting the potential of the pub as a business. We believe that the case that has been made in the two successful Asset of Community Value applications and listings underscores the significance of this pub to the community in West Walworth and that its loss would be a significant blow to the cohesion and wellbeing of an area that is already poorly served by community amenities.