

# Latest News On 'The Star' Of Our Village

## Dear Bentworth resident,

It's not common knowledge but we almost had new owners of The Star last month, who were willing to open it once again as a pub and restaurant. Sadly, due to personal reasons, they had to pull out, but only after they had invested thousands of pounds on the purchase procedure proving they were serious buyers.

**Why does this matter?** Because it shows there are people out there with energy and willingness to run the place as the community pub it once was, and not forfeit the heart and history of Bentworth to make a quick profit by changing the building into expensive, inappropriate terraced housing.

The current owners, Waller Energy, claim to have exhausted marketing opportunities to find a suitable buyer, insisting they feel the only option for them is to develop it instead. However, their marketing has exclusively been at a price far in excess of the independent valuation commissioned by East Hampshire District Council, with the full consent of Waller Energy.

## The previous EHDC Planning refusal document states:

'As with the previous application, there appears to have been some attempt to market the property, however, there are significant concerns at the adequacy of that marketing, the valuation and in the evidence provided. In light of the disparity between the valuation placed on the property by the applicant and the valuation that had been placed on the property by McCoys Pub Brokers Ltd, it was decided that a fully independent valuation would be commissioned. Fleurets were agreed by the applicant as an acceptable independent company to carry out that valuation and were instructed by East Hampshire District Council. The subsequent Valuation Report concludes with a market valuation of £260,000. This valuation is significantly below that which the property had been marketed at and is considerably below that at which offers had been made for the continued use of the pub. It also further supports the concerns raised with the previous application that the marketing has not been done at a realistic value and would appear that it was at a value that reflected an expectation of a residential uplift instead of retaining the property in its current use.'

The fact is Waller Energy have continually refused to accept this independent valuation. Their 2021 sales campaign was set at an asking price of £395,000. A huge **£135,000 MORE** than the valuation EHDC accepted as the true value two years ago.

Waller Energy have never seriously attempted to re-open, or price The Star Inn as a pub at a price which reflects the renovations required to do so. In the meantime, the building has been left empty and neglected, so logically the property should have been advertised at a lower price to reflect the costs involved in renovating the building back to a viable state. They now state it will now be too expensive to renovate as a pub due to this neglect. How can they possibly have it both ways?

If you visit The Rose and Crown in Upper Farringdon, or The Castle of Comfort in Medstead you'll experience how failing pubs can return as successful, viable businesses offering as much to the local community as they do to visitors. The fact that in April we almost had new publicans willing to revive The Star is evidence there is still a viable opportunity there. I hope you agree we shouldn't give up on what was once the heart of Bentworth, a place to sociate with the rest of the local community.

We must once again object to this latest application. Please take a moment and, in your own words, send the reply card to EHDC to register your objection. Alternatively go online and register your objection directly on the Planning Portal:

[www.planningpublicaccess.easthants.gov.uk](http://www.planningpublicaccess.easthants.gov.uk)

Thank you again for your support. Objections must be filed

**BEFORE Wednesday 19th May**

So please act now, or lose 'The Star' of our village life for ever.