

Marketing Statement

For

Conversion to 5 Flats

**Cobden Arms,
74-76 West Street,
Havant, Hampshire,
PO9 1LN**

For

Avalon Studios

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1.0 Generally

- 1.1 This Marketing Statement is in support of a Planning Application to the Havant Borough Council to Convert the Cobden Arms Public House, into 5 self-contained flats at 74-76, West Street, Havant, Hampshire, PO9 1PG.
- 1.2 No other purpose is anticipated or accepted. Copyright of this report remains with Martin Critchley Chartered Architect.
- 1.3 Reference should be made to the planning submission drawings for details of the proposals, ref:

1044	-	101	Existing GF Plan
		102	Existing FF + SF Plans
		201	Location Plan
		202	Block Plan
		220	Existing Site Plan
		221	Proposed Site Plan
		320	Ground FL Proposal
		321	First + Second FL Proposal
		401	Existing Elevations
		402	Existing Elevations
		420	Proposal Elevations
		421	Proposal Elevations

2.0 Physical Context

- 2.1 West Street is within the town centre of Havant. It is an extension one of the principal shopping streets, running east- west. The site is on the north side of the street, such that the principal elevation faces south.
- 2.2 The north side of the street retains much of the late Georgian and Victorian development plan, with domestic sized plots and an almost rural charm.
- 2.3 The south side of the street is a 1960's (typical style) two storey shop and office over block. Immediately opposite the site is the former 'Black Dog' public house, now converted and extended into a small housing development in a vernacular style.

- 2.4 The rear boundary of the site extends through to the Havant Stream, which separates it from a retail park to the North. There is no vehicular access from the north.
- 2.5 The site is a vacant public house – see below. It is believed that 74 West Street was the original Victorian Public House, which was extended into No.76 c. 1910.
- 2.7 The adjacent premises are residential to the west, and vacant retail with residential above to the east. The more modern retail units across the street are currently in use.
- 2.8 The general character of West Street to the west of Park Road is residential, although a number of commercial premises remain – see below. There are recently opened retail parks 50 M to the north and 100 M to the south. The pedestrianised shopping precinct of West Street (East of Park Road) is 100 M to the east.
- 2.9 At the site, West Street is a single carriageway urban street with footpaths both sides. There is full street lighting. There is a 30 mph speed limit. There are parking restrictions. The junction with Brockhampton Lane is opposite the site.
- 2.10 The site is within the ‘Black Dog’ Conservation Area.

3.0 Social / Economic Context

- 3.1 Havant is a busy small town, of the type often referred to as a ‘Market Town’, although it never had a cattle market. Current economic forces are driven by the railway station with good connections to London Waterloo, the location of the Borough administration, and by social and tourist activities related to the adjacent coast and harbours. Outside the town are industrial estates with high technology manufacturing in computing, aerospace and pharmaceutical industries.
- 3.2 The town centre serves the immediate hinterland, and the adjacent communities of Hayling Island, Leigh Park, Rowlands Castle and Emsworth..
- 3.3 The site has been in commercial use for at least 150 years, in something like the present form. The basic street pattern of the

town centre was laid down by the Romans – north, south, east and west streets, and there has been a retail element on the street ever since.

- 3.4 West Street, west of Park Road, is in transition. The small Georgian and Victorian shops are closing, and gradually reverting to residential use, or remain vacant pending an uncertain future. The combinations of the new retail parks nearby, and the prevalence of 'on line' shopping, have removed the need for, and the viability of, small local shops.
- 3.5 The commercial and trading activity in West Street is much reduced.
- 3.6 No.74 is the original Victorian public house, now the eastern two thirds of the frontage. This is a typical town public house of the period, with a bow fronted, frosted, saloon window, and with two bar entrance doors, one to the front saloon, the other to the rear 'public' bar. Originally there would have been a central servery covering both bars. That servery was lost, probably in the 1910 extensions (see below).
- 3.7 The original No. 74 frontage was symmetrical, with the central bow window and matching bar doors either side, and with a pair of typical late Victorian sash bay windows at first floor level. Rusticated quoins define the limits of the frontage.
- 3.8 In approximately 1910, the premises were extended to include No.76, presumably a house prior to the conversion. A third bar was added (probably a 'Snug' bar), with a third entrance door at the west end of the frontage. A third matching bay window was added to the first floor and the quoins to the west end corner. Although harmonious, the combined frontage is not symmetrical, and the 'middle' superfluous quoins are an anachronistic feature. The simple bar window of No.76 is a poor imitation of the original No.74 bar window.
- 3.9 In parallel with the decline of the commercial activities of small towns is a change in the 'demographics' of Public House uses. A combination of the drink/drive laws and the availability of cheap alcohol from supermarkets have reduced the numbers of pub visitors. Also, the development of large town centre 'theme' pubs have drawn the free spending young drinkers into the town

centres, away from the local 'neighbourhood' pubs. Some country pubs have continued successfully by developing their restaurant trade, and marketing their rural credentials. The net losers in this process are the traditional neighbourhood pubs, such as the Cobden Arms. Nationally, according to the Licensed Victuallers Association, public houses are closing at a rate of twenty five per week.

3.10 It is significant that the former 'Black Dog' P.H. opposite has closed and been redeveloped for housing. Approximately five years ago. The Prince of Wales, the next P.H. 500 M to the West is struggling. To the East in the town centre, 'The Star' and the 'White Horse' in North Street have both recently closed. The former Dolphin P.H. in Park Road is now a Care Hostel.

3.11 The Cobden Arms closed after Christmas 2009. The Tenant closed the pub without stock or assets. There had been a number of Police complaints about activities and disturbances from the pub during the Autumn of 2009. (This reflects the increasing residential use of this part of West Street.) The Pub was boarded up and marketed by commercial agents (Fleurets), as a Public House, from January 2010 until March 2011. There was no interest and no takers, until the present owners bought the site with a view to redevelopment.

3.12 In our view, the closure of the Cobden Arms must be seen in the context of two separate commercial and business trends :-

- A. The collapse of trade for urban public houses.
(As 3.10 > 3.12 above).
- B. Changes in the trading climate of West Street to the west of Park Road. (As 2.8, 3.4 > 3.6 above).

3.13 Loss of the Public House use was recognised in the previously approved application **APP/12/003**.

4.0 Viability of the Cobden Arms.

4.1 As per 3.13 – A, above, the Cobden Arms is not viable as a public house.

- 4.2 The pub closed in December 2009, in a bankrupt condition (3.12 above). Prior to the closure, the establishment had clearly been operating with difficulty and in reduced circumstances. Following a brief peak with the Christmas trade, custom dropped to unsustainable levels, and the tenant closed the tenancy.
- 4.3 Following closure, no alternative tenants came forward, and the brewery closed the pub, and offered the premises for sale. (Appendix 1). It should be noted that the general condition of the buildings and the fittings of the pub as at December 2009, were very poor. Prior to the closure there had been a prolonged period of poor trading, with minimum maintenance of the premises and no investment at all in new fittings or furniture. It was in need of major refurbishment to be attractive, and was probably of a condition that it would have failed health safety checks appropriate to the use. With a record of low usage and a poor public reputation it is not surprising that the brewery did not pursue a new investment programme, and that no tenant was prepared to take on the liability of the premises.
- 4.4 At December 2009, the premises were not viable as they stood, and new investment could not be justified on the poor trading use. This was also a period of low investment in commercial premises following the collapse of investment banking to property projects. Investment funds were not available, even if the project had been viable.
- 4.5 The failure of the Cobden Arms as a public house is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a national trend as drinking and social habits have changed. 3.10 above. The Times of 22nd July 2009 reported:

"Pubs closing at a rate of 52 a week...." (Appendix 2)

The report, apart from noting the scale of the pub closures reported :-

"...but that since the decline of the property market, pubs that had shut had less appeal to prospective buyers, and had been left boarded up."

This describes the Cobden Arms perfectly.

4.6 Between 2003 and 2009, 8,600 pubs closed in the U.K. (British Beer and Pub Association figures), Appendix 3.

4.7 Neither is the Cobden Arms an isolated incidence locally. It is part of a pattern of public house closures in Havant (3.11 above). Clearly, the closure of the 'Black Dog' opposite in recent years is a significant indicator of the trading conditions locally, and it was perhaps only a matter of time before the closure of the Cobden Arms also.

The closure of the Dolphin P.H. in Park Road is contemporary with the closure of the Black Dog. The Dolphin site has now been fully redeveloped as a hostel for the Mentally Handicapped.

Other recent public house closures are the 'Star' opposite Havant railway station and the 'White Horse' at the junction of North Street and East Street. These too are of significance and relevance when considering the Cobden Arms. Both are within walking distance, and are in similar locations on the periphery of the old retail streets. Both are similar in age and condition to the Cobden Arms, in that they require maintenance and modernisation which can not be justified on the current and predicted levels of custom.

A further public house of the same type – 'The Perseverance', in North Street, closed in 2012 and is now the 'Red Chilli' restaurant.

The 'Bear Hotel' in East Street, 50 metres from the 'White Horse' was formerly a very busy establishment, but is now trading at low levels and in need of maintenance and investment. The hotel and pub is being offered as a site for redevelopment as part of the East Street / Pallant proposals.

Between the White Horse and the Bear hotel is the 'Havant Club', a private members club which is in effect a private bar and is a part of the public house repertoire of Havant. The club is struggling for members, is rarely used, and only open for restricted hours.

4.8 'The Parchment Makers' public house on the corner of Park Road and West Street is a modern pub, converted from the former Tax Offices, and operated under the J.D. Wetherspoon chain. This pub has retained reasonable trade with the benefit of the Wetherspoon marketing and promotional offers, based on the size of the chain and their aggressive price cutting. Critically this establishment is

only 70 metres from the Cobden Arms, and establishes unbeatable competition for re-opening the Cobden Arms. Wetherspoon's have effectively 'cornered' the residual custom for the neighbourhood, and provide sufficient capacity for that available custom. There is not scope for another Wetherspoon's in Havant, and the Cobden Arms is not an appropriate site or establishment if there were.

4.9 As above, there are a number of public houses closed already in Havant, and a number of others under threat. Clearly, a potential pub purchaser will be more interested in a pub under threat than a closed pub. A pub under threat is at least still a 'going concern' and will be reasonably complete in its fixtures and fittings. No offers are coming forward to purchase, other than for redevelopment. In this climate it is pointless to market the Cobden Arms as a public house, when there is no hope of a sale or of successful pub trading. Summarising the lack of viability of the Cobden Arms:

- A. Collapse of local custom.
- B. Dominant competition from Wetherspoon's.
- C. Poor condition of the premises.
- D. Poor reputation of the premises.
- E. Uncertain future for the neighbourhood.
- F. Increasing residential uses adjacent, resisting re-opening the pub.

5.0 **Changes to West Street**

5.1 West Street west of Park Road is a neighbourhood in transition (2.3, 2.8, 3.4 > 3.6 above). This has contributed to the failure and lack of prospect for the Cobden Arms. What was once a busy little community with two pubs and local shops is now a thoroughfare on the edge of an industrial estate, gradually becoming residential in use.

5.2 The closure of the 'Black Dog' opposite the Cobden Arms is of double significance. As above, the closure of one is a portent for the other. Worse for the Cobden Arms, now that the 'Black Dog' has

been converted into town houses and apartments, the people living there no longer wish to have a pub in their midst and are unlikely to support its re-opening.

- 5.3 Similarly the former Jacobs Builders yard at 88 West Street, 50 meters to the west of the Cobden Arms, has also been converted into apartments. This is part of the change from a mixed use neighbourhood, where a public house would be acceptable as part of the mix, to a predominantly residential neighbourhood, where a public house is no longer appropriate.
- 5.4 Of the short parade of shops between the Cobden Arms and Park Road, No.s 68, 70 and 72 are all currently vacant.
- 5.5 45-49 West Street, opposite the Cobden Arms, on the corner of West Street and Brockhampton Lane has contains a series of small, independent shops with offices above. The premises is the end unit of a crescent of 1960's retail development extending east round to Park Road. It is a building typical of the period with no local character.
- 5.6 The redevelopment of the Tesco site and the retail park 200 metres to the south on Solent Road, has effectively drawn the retail use, and the customers, out of West Street. This indirectly helps the burgeoning residential use of West Street, and contributes to the demise of the Cobden Arms.
- 5.7 The former building contractors yard (Henry Jones) at 51-55 West Street, and within the Conservation Area, has now closed and is vacant. It has the potential and likelihood of being redeveloped for residential use. In the present market with very limited funding available for redevelopment, it may be several years before proposals come forward. This is a large and close site, which in its currently redundant form and unknown future, contributes to the uncertainty and unsustainability of the Cobden Arms.

6.0 Summary

- 6.1 The Cobden Arms is no longer viable as a public house as 4.9 above.

- 6.2 The Cobden Arms premises are no longer appropriate for a public house.
- 6.3 The location of the Cobden Arms is no longer appropriate for a public house.
- 6.4 Marketing the Cobden Arms as a public house is a pointless exercise.
- 6.5 An alternative use for the Cobden Arms has been previously recognised under planning approval **APP/12/003**.

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