

Appendix 4

7.2 Please explain why the transfer of the land or, if applicable, the tenant's interest, is likely to further the achievement of sustainable development in relation to the land.

In order to provide a focus for a living, vibrant community, there is an urgent need for a Community pub to serve as a social focus for the village. As stated, the Albert Hotel closed in 2017. The other pub in the village, the Ferrybridge Hotel, closed permanently during the time of Covid restrictions. As a result, the community no longer has a suitable community pub and hub and is losing out on the benefits that it can provide.

In its present closed and derelict state, the Albert is clearly unable to provide any benefit to the community. As explained in section 7.8 below, planning applications for change of use including also a planning appeal all resulted in the denial of permission for change of use. It was a significant factor in the refusal of planning permission (upheld by the Reporter in the Planning Appeal) that the Owners had failed to demonstrate that use for the present planning use (as a hotel) was not viable. Indeed, it is the considered opinion of the community Body and ACG that a hotel and pub business can be operated viably in that location and that, once re-opened, the hotel business is clearly sustainable.

First, there is strong local demand for the reopening of the Albert. Not only are similar communities able to sustain pubs and restaurants, but there is a particularly strong demand in North Queensferry. The village has 1092 residents but has had no pub following closure of The Albert and The Ferrybridge Hotel. The residents have made it clear through their response to the Local Development Plan, their objections to the planning applications for change of use and their votes in the Part 5 ballot, that they wish to have the Albert back as a functioning social hub for the village.

Second, North Queensferry also has the advantage of being a busy tourist hub with its unique position next to the Forth Bridges, Fife Coastal path, Pilgrims' Way, Deep Sea World, Light Tower, the new Forth Bridges Trail and Fife Route 191. As a result, there is a substantial tourist footfall but no local licensed premises in the middle of the village catering to the needs of visitors. It is common to find visitors to the village seeking hospitality but failing to find it as both Rankin's Cafe and The Wee Restaurant have limited opening hours and limited capacity. It is, indeed, significant that the owners of The Wee Restaurant and Rankin's Cafe are each in support of the proposal to restore the hotel as a community hub. Furthermore, there is a need for the provision of local accommodation in the village for visitors. No such accommodation exists. The Doubletree by Hilton, which is on the edge of the village envelope, tends to cater to a different market.

AGC has created a financial model, using up to date costs, which demonstrates that the building can sustain a pub and restaurant business with phased opening of the bedrooms. Restoration would also boost local employment during and beyond repair of the building.

The community body and ACG are aware of the change in drinking habits and the challenge of sustaining hospitality in the winter months, but research confirms that there is sufficient local demand and all year-round tourist activity to sustain the business once reopened.

There has been a number of successful community asset transfers of pubs and hotels in Scotland. ACG members have visited three such community run ventures and have taken part in the Plunkett Foundation Network of Scottish Community Pubs to learn first-hand of others' experience. The Plunkett foundation has documented the growth of community owned pubs in the UK and has provided support to community groups. ACG have also received support from the Community Ownership Support Service and Fife council Communities and Neighbourhoods team. A case officer has been appointed by the Scottish Land Fund.

In short, the Community Body is satisfied that there is a currently unmet demand for the provision of a hotel providing accommodation for visitors as well as the social benefits of a local meeting place with space for supply of food and drinks, a place for heritage displays and a focus for local activity groups such as cycling, curling, rowing, kayaking and singing groups. It is also satisfied that the sustainability of the development of the land will be assured by meeting these unmet needs.