

You have before you a proposal for a permanent change of use for a retail unit which is contrary to our own policy ESN 18. The report is badly prepared and contains a number of inaccuracies.

In para 2.1 it states the building contains a convenience store and flats above. The building contains a large convenience store, a post office, a takeaway and flats above. In short this is a parade of commercial premises with flats above.

In para 5.1 it states no alternative premises are available when there are at the nearby Community centre as acknowledged further on in the report in para 8.5

In para 8.2 and 8.3 you are told a permanent change of use is acceptable if A1 use is unviable but no evidence is provided that this is the case except a statement that the property was empty from 2004 – 2007. This error is repeated in note 2 of the recommendations.

Finally in para 8.5 it is stated that it is not intended that the shop will compete with King Arthur's Hall but as you can see in the objection from the Community Association that this shop will be offered free of charge whereas the Community Association has an obligation to charge for providing similar facilities. This not only competition it is unfair competition.

In 2007 we granted a temporary permission for change of use. The planning policy comments at that time were "No evidence was submitted that retail use is no longer viable or of a lack of commercial demand". Recent history including the public and council campaign to retain the convenience store and post office here has shown there is strong support for commercial use of the entire parade of shops. The expressions of interest received to take over the former Co-op premises show there is business interest in these shops. There is no evidence that a commercial use is not viable and as such a permanent change of use is in clear breach of our own policy.

In 2007 the supporting evidence supplied by TAP states "this will only be a temporary arrangement until increased funding can be secured to invest in King Arthur's Hall". Nothing has changed since then except that increased funding has been found and continues to be found to enhance the hall. A permanent change of use cannot be justified and goes against all the work being done, and funded by, this council to improve facilities at the hall. A permanent change of use would indicate a complete lack of joined up thinking about future funding and management of community facilities in the area.

The Alamein Community Association has no objection to the continued use of this shop in the short term nor does it object to the extension of opening hours. The Community Association values the work done in the Askalot shop. The two work well together and complement each other in building a strong community in Alamein ward. It has always been the objective that the facilities supplied by Askalot would eventually be transferred into King Arthur's Hall and that the shop would revert to commercial A1 use.

Given that long term objective a permanent change of use is not acceptable and I would ask the committee instead to grant, as they did in 2007, permission for a temporary change of use only.