

Matters Arising update – Kemsley Arms

Cllr Mike Dendor provided the update below:

As well as being a ward councillor for this area, I am also Trustee/Treasurer/Clerk of Kemsley Community Centre Trust (KCCT) managing the KVH premises (Kemsley Village Hall) next door to the Kemsley Arms site. The Trust has a 125-year repairing lease with Swale Borough Council (SBC) for the KVH premises.

On behalf of the KCCT Board and of Kemsley residents, I have to say that the time taken to deal with this application is very disappointing and it is also very disappointing that the Kemsley Arms building has been left to rot by SBC for so long. Frank Lloyd, the founder of the village that built the two community buildings in the 1920s, must be turning in his grave!

The Kemsley Arms building at the top of the hill in Grovehurst Avenue is an eyesore making a mockery of any street view. The site is an invitation to squatters, local gangs of youths, and thieves (all internal metal has been stripped). There have been fights, fires, and vandalism which have often spilled over into KVH premises including the nursery. I have also had a number of complaints about mice and rats in neighbouring buildings.

Trustees, volunteers, and Councillors have spent years trying to raise the public's perception of Kemsley Village area using KVH as the focus. We have been somewhat successful in that, but KVH still loses potential hirers because of (historic) public perception of Kemsley and the fact that the first thing that they see when they come to view KVH is the run-down wreck of a building at the top of the hill!

I spoke to the developers on Monday 6 June 2022. It is now 2.5 years since developers initially put forward plans for the Kemsley Arms site. The Kemsley Arms building has had to weather 8 or 9 winters since being abandoned and is falling apart but still there seems to be no urgency on planning progress. I have several times asked if the developers would like me to call-in the application or if they might appeal on non-determination grounds, but they have continued to say that they would prefer to work with SBC. I think the developers, KCCT Trustees, volunteers and residents have shown a lot of patience, but patience is now wearing very thin.

The developers have agreed (some time ago) to all S106 charges and parking conditions and have been told that there is nothing else stopping approval apart from formal legal agreement for S106. They are surprised that this has only mentioned now. They, and I, believe that the wording of the agreement could have been done long ago with figures simply slotted in when finalised.

As regards parking conditions, agreement with SBC and KCCT on use of KCCT grounds for parking spaces is a property ownership issue that does not need to be resolved for planning approval to be given. Those discussions will take place after planning approval is granted. In the meantime, with planning approval the developers can start renovation of the Kemsley Arms building as they have enough

parking spaces within their ownership to cater for occupancy of that part of the development. They can then leave the second phase of development in abeyance until resolution of ground for additional parking spaces is completed.