

Statement of Jonathan Rice of The Bramley Apple dated 7th October 2020

I have been the day to day manager of the pub since the beginning of 2020 whilst Aimee was the DPS. The pub was closed during lock-down between 23rd March and 4th July 2020. The overall management of the pub is by experienced area managers, Paul Linehan and Avtar Singh who have managed pubs on behalf of Greene King as well as numerous privately owned pubs. They are also the area managers of The Roaring Meg pub in Newark.

I have lived in Southwell throughout my life and know many of the residents. I have also worked in other pubs in the town. I feel very much part of the community and my intention has always been to provide the community with a friendly local pub and to be recognised as a responsible, caring pub manager. For this reason, I have communicated with the local residents and invited their comments as to what they want from the pub and I have dealt with any concerns they may have and taken on board ideas which enhance the pub, and hence the community. Many of our current customers are now local, living within a short distance of the pub. Several have said they intended to issue letters of support to the Licensing Review.

During the lock-down, I organised and undertook a complete internal refurbishment of the pub. I also made the pub "Covid 19 secure", ensuring that self-distancing was maintained, that access to the bar by the public was prohibited and that there was a good airflow through the pub. Hand sanitiser stations were installed and customer details taken from the first day the pub re-opened. The number of guests permitted in the pub was reduced by 50% to ensure there was plenty of space to enable proper distancing. This by necessity meant that customers were encouraged to go outside whenever the weather permitted.

The nature of the pub is that of a community pub, frequented by locals, members of the Rugby Club, Young Farmers and more recently also the students at Brackenhurst College. Each of the 3 pubs along Church Street hosts a slightly different set of customers. In particular, the Coach House tends to attract fewer and slightly older drinkers. The Hearty Goodfellow is more focused on food, so its customers tend to leave a little earlier than the Bramley Apple customers. The Bramley also attracts other pub and restaurant staff from across town when they have finished their shifts. This is important to the town as it is often their only option to socialise outside of work. There was a complaint about noise in August so I suggested a meeting be held at the pub with the locals to address that. A meeting was held on 22nd August and was attended by the local licensing officer, Tony Dennis. A Jill Morrison came to this meeting which was, I believe, her first visit to the pub. She is not a known customer.

I implemented all the agreed matters. It was agreed that a progress review would be made with Mr Dennis in 4 weeks' time. We agreed that for the next 4 weeks, we would trial closing the pub earlier; i.e. closing pub doors at 10.30 and customers leaving by 11.00 p.m. Monday to Thursday inc. and Friday, Saturday and Sunday to take last orders at 11.30 p.m. and all customers to leave by midnight. This has been strictly adhered to.

During lock-down, we installed CCTV which gives us confidence and confirmation that we have implemented the trial rules strictly.

Notwithstanding, further complaints were made to Mr Dennis in early September, during the trial period. Whilst all complaints are taken seriously and we aim to be good neighbours, those complaints are mostly unjustified and exaggerated:

27th August people still at the pub at 11.44 Sunday 31st August people outside the pub and people in the pub drinking at 23.34. This is within the agreed trial hours.

Friday 4th September – noise outside at 23.50. This is within the agreed hours of opening. I cannot confirm or deny there was a noise, but I can say that we were monitoring customers leaving the pub at this time, and that the noise could have come from any member(s) of the public in the vicinity of the pub at that time. The customers of the two pubs further out on Church Street will pass the Bramley Apple on their way home if they live towards the town centre.

Saturday 5th September a group of 20 people at the pub. On this occasion, our area manager was also at the pub to monitor noise levels following comments by a local. There were two groups of people in particular at the pub – the Young Farmers who were well behaved and quiet, and a group of footballers who were probably already drunk when they arrived but behaved well enough at first and then became loud. The area manager was on the door ensuring no other people entered the pub whilst James Kemp and I persuaded the group to leave. All of this was recorded on CCTV and Mr Dennis has commended us on how well we handled the group.

It is regrettable that sometimes groups get boisterous but it is not something we encourage. We strictly follow the “pub rules” and guidance as agreed with Tony Dennis. We do have a member of staff (usually myself or James Kemp) outside whose job it is to limit the number of guests congregating outside, to monitor noise and ensure customers leave in a quiet and respectful manner. However, once they are off our premises, we don’t have full control. The allegations of noise may relate to anyone on Church Street later at night, not just The Bramley Apple.

We issued “approved” customers with a club membership card to enable a selected few to drink later in the evening (still within the reduced hours agreed with Mr Dennis). This system seemed to work very well, but the further Covid 19 restrictions have since required the pub to stop servicing and to close by 10.00 p.m. so we could not continue with the club.