

March 16 2022, 7.30pm

DRRA Meeting to Discuss Licensed Bar / Restaurant Proposal – Darlington Pavilion

52 attendees

1. President of DRRA Steve, started the meeting off with an introduction, indicating and emphasising that the purpose of the meeting was for open discussion regardless as to whether residents were fully supportive, partially supportive or opposed to the proposal. He announced that Shire planning officers had also been invited but were unable to attend, sending their apologies. The development proposer was attending but only to listen to views. She would not be speaking on this occasion. The Councillors Trish Cook, James Martin, Doug Jeans and Luke Ellery were also in attendance. Steve then went on to outline some of the key themes that have arisen in discussion with Darlington residents and his observations on matters arising – see Item #2 below.
2. When the correspondence of this nature is delivered to DRRA, our first objective is to protect the character of Darlington. We take that objective as our remit with respect to this particular proposal. The second objective of DRRA is to safeguard the interests Darlington ratepayers & residents. DRRA put a post about the proposal on Facebook Darlington Hub and within a day there were over 100 comments. The comments were mostly not in relation to the design and detailed documents but more about general opinions that were nearly all in favour of a Bar/Restaurant. Steve reported that some residents are in opposition whereas on the hub the majority of opinions seem to be in favour, and that hearing conversations around the village there are also concerns about certain aspects of the proposal. The purpose of this meeting therefore was to give residents an open forum to discuss their views and to listen to the views of others. It is also encouraging to those who wish to submit their concerns/support and feedback on the proposed development directly to the Shire.
3. The proposal has been posted on the Shire website but Steve provided a brief overview. A proposed restaurant and bar is to operate four days a week with a maximum capacity of 90 in the restaurant and 37 in the bar – Thursday to Sunday, 3pm until late. Saturday noon till late and Sunday noon till 9pm. The existing parking bays comprise 17, the calculation for proposed parking would be 46, there are also other options proposed including verge parking on Montrose and the public parking in Darlington Station Reserve. Some people are also expected to walk to the venue. The document also addresses themes relating to noise levels and noise reduction etc. Other items were not covered in detail but include waste management, soil erosion etc. Participants were invited to review the documents in detail as necessary.
4. Steve handed over to the floor, inviting attendees to speak.
5. Speaker 1: Relatives own couple of properties very close to site location. He posed the question who will gain from this proposal i.e Darlington Residents or other stakeholders? He expressed his belief that this is primarily a financial proposal but expressed concerns that from the residents' view this would have a negative impact on the character of the village. He also referred to other opportunities for dining in the village e.g. at The Hive, The Little Nook and raised concerns about the impact of new competition for existing businesses. He also raised concerns about the impact of the development on local residents on Montrose i.e. increased traffic, increased noise, parking, increased lighting and users leaving late at night with related noise and potential of unruly behaviour. Speaker 1 also raised concerns about the suggested hours of operation i.e. 'till late' emphasising that the business imperative may encourage longer hours of opening. He also expressed concerns about the impact on people with young children living closest to site location which should be taken into consideration. Overall he concluded by stating that he felt the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character of Darlington and potential reduction in property prices and particularly those close by properties. He also pointed to the problems with waste

management and rubbish/packaging being left which would have a detrimental impact on the environment. A further primary area of concern was the negative impact of the changes from a family environment to a commercial environment and again spoke about the potential of unruly behaviour later at night and related implications for residents as ratepayers.

6. Speaker 2: Lives very close to site location and indicated that she would be directly impacted by this development. Raised concerns about some of the drivers behind this initiative and her direct opposition due to the implications for close by residents as well as for the village as a whole. She indicated that a group of residents from nearby streets have already had discussions to air their thoughts and perspectives. A key issue relates to challenges with parking, the proposal refers to 5m parking on the pavement, it would require parallel parking, there would be no egress in the case of a bushfire. Also indicated that problems can be observed in other locations which may also occur and in the instance of a bushfire would create significant problems for safety of residents. In the proposal there is a reference to 46 parking spaces but in fact the proposed number of seatings, plus staff would require many more parking spaces. Also pointed to the legal requirements you have to provide 8 spaces for staff, so there would be a great deal more demand for adequate parking. Allestree corner already creates significant problems for parking. Also in the documents there are differences in suggested opening hours – which presents a lack of clarity and a lack of thought in the planning process. There was a request for more clarity on 'late' with respect to specific closing time i.e. is it 11pm or is it midnight? This would be especially problematic for local residents and those with young children in particular. The noise is also an area of concern and particularly late at night when patrons are leaving. Raised concerns about the approach to evaluation of noise – has there been an on-site noise investigation to explore how noise might be more robustly controlled? This would be something to investigate on-site as a matter of significant importance and impact. There are already concerns about noise pollution from the fans currently being used in the liquor store, the proposal would add even further to this noise pollution. The report speaks about soft management of noise into the space, i.e. suggesting that the noise might be mitigated if staff close windows but Speaker 2 indicated that this would be problematic and particularly given that the proposal refers to bands and other musical events. There are also some recommendations about materials usage – i.e. are the materials sufficient to mitigate against noise? Further questions about what controls have been implemented and incorporated into the planning process should be addressed. Speaker 2 also concluded by noting that there is an overlap where at 3pm parents are waiting to pick their children up from the School. This would add to the parking challenges which would emerge from this proposal. She concluded by expressing deep concerns about the impact on residents and the character of the village.
7. Speaker 3: Has been a resident of Darlington for 42 years and a previous member of DRRRA. He expressed some support for the bar but also raised concerns about the size of the proposal and specifically with respect to it being a commercial zoning area. He complemented the current owners regarding subtle advertising etc. However with the proposal he noted that licensing indicates that a restaurant is possible but not a bar. Speaker 3 also raised concerns about discrepancies with respect to the suggested hours which differ between the documents - confusion in the documentation suggests a lack of appropriate oversight. Saturday and Sunday would mean 280+ people which would create significant problems for parking. Speaker 3 also raised concerns about traffic – even while there has been a suggestion that Darlington residents might attend, the majority of patrons would be from outside Darlington and thus create a greater demand for parking. Opposite the post office is not a parking bay it is a reserve so should retain this function. Forty or fifty cars would add further problems with respect to congestion and opportunities for parking for

hikers and families who are visiting Darlington to enjoy a day out. He also raised concerns about the potential for the reserve to be covered with asphalt given the outcomes of high usage. Speaker 3 also raised concerns about the impact on the character of Darlington as requirements escalate.

8. Speaker 4: Handed out architectural drawings as submitted in the proposal for the audience to review. Indicated he was attending on behalf of the Darlington History Group (DHG), which is neither for nor against the proposal but more concerned about the treatment of the Jack Gilks bakery. The History Group has already put in a submission to the Shire which will be available. He then read out the covering letter which DHG has sent to the Shire. Speaker 4 noted he has a background in engineering and architecture and drafting engineering drawings so has a robust understanding of plans and development proposals.
9. The letter expresses the following (summarised) points: “We wish to make our position quite clear in the first place the history group was invited to provide feedback on the Jack Gilks bakery and the impact of the proposal. Despite the fact that after careful consideration and after exchanges with the architect DHG’s advice has been ignored”. The letter raises concerns about the impact of the development on the verandah of the existing structure, it will not retain its current aspect. DHG believes that the current structure should be retained without alteration. The architect isn’t showing sufficient regard for the heritage building. There are two main concerns one is that the heritage value of the existing structure will be destroyed. The visual integrity of the verandah will be compromised. He then referred to the drawing which demonstrates the proposed structure and raised concerns about the impact of the proposal on the existing structure i.e. the roof etc. The second concern Speaker 4 raised was with respect to the verandah and that the visual integrity of the current building will be compromised. He’s also concerned about the use of glass panels which will compromise the visual to the verandah and said that the entire building is over 100 years’ old and is listed on the Shire’s Municipal Inventory – this necessitates more stringent adherence to the Shire’s requirements for all building/construction. Speaker 4 also emphasised again that the historical status of the building would be compromised and the aesthetic value of the existing building would also be compromised. It is the DHG’s assessment that the architect has a wonderful opportunity to take the verandah and use it as a source of attraction. Suggested several recommendations: providing that the proposal satisfies all requirements relating to parking, sewerage, lighting and noise management then the Shire may wish to approve, the DHG humbly request only if the building’s heritage is preserved as outlined in the letter and only if the plans are redrafted and then resubmitted for further examination and potential approval. He concluded saying that the DHG wishes to review all further proposals.
10. Development Proposer then commented, saying that the Gilks bakery has significant graffiti on the side and they are making a significant attempt to preserve the current structure. She also suggested that the verandah is in fact being preserved and that they have an ambition for the verandah to be seen and showcased and challenged Speaker 4’s evaluation of the proposal. There was some differences of opinion on whether or not the verandah is being left in place.
Speaker 3 then noted that the bakery has been decaying for the last 10 years, and that the owners are making an effort here to preserve / restore.
11. Speaker 5: Lives in Darlington but not close to the bar and wouldn’t be impacted by the restaurant noise etc and would likely frequent the bar as proposed. He has already submitted his feedback to the Shire. He has a close professional association with the construction industry. He supports the proposal in principle – though would like to suggest some changes. He moved to Darlington because of its current character and would like to see this preserved – including the built environment with home construction being sensitive to the current character of the village. He feels that the aesthetics need to be adjusted so

that they are more in-keeping with the current character of the village. He showed a picture of the proposed design to the audience. From a professional perspective he would like some assurance that the design is incorporated into the character of the village rather than the proposed aesthetic which is more modern. This synergy is very important in order to preserve and build our community. The flavour of Darlington has been maintained with sensitivity to the use of natural materials and stone.

12. Speaker 6: Acknowledged that he is a member of DRRRA but is not speaking on behalf of DRRRA but more his own perspective. He has lived in Darlington for many years and has always imagined that one day we might have a small bar or gathering place such as a wine bar with the right ambiance for the village and its patrons. He emphasised the importance of ambiance – when he heard about the proposal he was very much in favour but raised concerns about the scale of the proposal which had already been raised by other speakers. When he looks at the plans and the seating arrangement he understand that there are three areas, a large area and two smaller areas. The diagrams demonstrate, for example in the main area, shows capacity for large numbers of seating, i.e. benches and tables. He has concerns about the ambiance which would be created by an area of this size and the impact on noise and parking requirements. Regardless of the actual numbers he has concerns about the atmosphere will be created and whether or not it can be aligned with the character of the village. He emphasised that his perspective is based on his observations and interpretations of the plans as submitted. He was hoping it would be a niche gathering place for residents and other visitors rather than a much larger concern.
13. Speaker 7: Lives a bit further up hill away from site location, and has a mechanical engineering background. Congratulated the proposers on giving the initiative a go, however he also raised concerns about the longitudinal impact of the development. He also raised concerns about the parking and how it would create noise and congestion, augmenting noise pollution for those who live close by and elsewhere.
14. Speaker 8: Lives very close to site location and raised particular concerns that in the noise report there are some assumptions made which are problematic and may not be practically accurate. There has been insufficient modelling done on noise pollution, amplified music, parking requirements etc. Much more careful investigation is required and monitored at all times i.e. throughout the year. Noise in Darlington carries during the weekend but also at other times, to have this facility four days a week is going to impact on a broad range of stakeholders including families with young children and visitors to the village for hiking.
15. Speaker 9: A resident of Darlington. He said he is torn about this development recognising the possibilities but also the drawbacks. He expressed a concern for more detail and more robust documentation and investigation of the implications of the proposal. He congratulated the owners for giving it a go but also warned that heritage can easily be lost and that in some respects we often don't realise the implications of a proposal until they are already having a negative impact in the location. He indicated that there are differing views about heritage and preservation but that there also has to be some flexibility. Proposers have tried to make it work, some of the work in the design has been excellent but commercially he recognised that the facility has to be of a particular size. If this cannot be met then perhaps the proposal should not go ahead. We should not be committing to allowing the reserve to be used for parking because of the related outcomes and problems. Need to consider the modifications required and the impact on commercial viability of the proposal. Referred back to a previous time when the Darlington Club used to have their drinks in the same location many years ago.
16. Speaker 10: Has lived in Darlington since 1984 and lives in one of the nearby roads and spoke directly to noise mitigation and how noise travels widely from Darlington. She also talked about people using trail bikes toward Glen Forest and the impact of residents in the neighbourhood. She raised concerns about how noise reverberates around the valley and

the implications of that for this particular proposal. Speaker 10 is also one of the coordinators for FODS which has existed for many years and has worked hard to develop a gravel pit, has been working on the reserve for well in excess of 20 years and has made significant improvements to the ambiance. Noted that most weekends no parking is available in the reserve. Shire recently intended to pave the car park reserve but a decision was taken that this would not be appropriate – this would substantially change a central part of Darlington which is a heritage reserve used by cyclists, walkers, children. The parking facility which currently exists is suited to its current purpose not suited to having marked bays and will also impact on trees and vegetation. Same applies to putting 90 degree parking on Montrose which would require the removal of trees and vegetation which would have a negative impact environmentally.

17. Speaker 11: Lives further up the hill on a different road to site location and has lived here for 40 years. He didn't think he would be here tonight and was very much in favour of the idea of having a small bar, acknowledging that we need to change and embrace change as long as it is viable. He then raised concerns about the impact of the proposal on the bakery building, we are going to end up with a lose-lose situation of the expansion is too big. Noted that many people come to Darlington because of its history and character. He indicated that he has spoken with the Development Proposer about the initiative but is still concerned about the contemporary architecture. He had anticipated that the old structure would remain to complement the lesser hall and the old church. Speaker 11 feels that the proposal needs to speak directly to the romance and character of Darlington as it is - i.e. not swallow it up. Again he wants to preserve Darlington, would enjoy the use of a bar but it has to have synergy with the flavour of the village. Talked also about recent developments which have impacted on Darlington in the past i.e. construction done in the 80s. So we need to learn from this error of the past.
18. Speaker 12 – in principle very much for the proposal in terms of catering to an emerging population. However he also said he wants to have a drink in the old bakery rather than in a more modern structure so raised concerns about the aesthetic of the proposal.
19. Speaker 13. He acknowledges the need for development and change initiatives. Has a background in construction and experience with noise pollution control. He emphasised the need to be very careful with noise pollution otherwise it will impact on quality of life and residential property. Need to be fair to the proposers – is this worth the effort that they are putting into the initiative? Would the village seriously engage with a more reduced and scaled-down version of the current proposal? Need to be sensitive to the cost of the proposal.
20. An attendee then asked about what sort of size would be viable if the proposal is reduced to a smaller capacity. Speaker 13 responded saying that taking into consideration economies of scale, a bar which can cater to 30-40 people four days a week would struggle to keep afloat. He expressed his view, based on his experience, that four nights a week will be difficult commercially with the proposed reduced size. He emphasised again that the proposal has to be viable for the owners as well as structurally sensitive to the heritage of Darlington. He also suggested that we should think about preserving existing structures rather than allowing them to fall into disrepair i.e. considering existing structures in the village which should be cared for and repaired as necessary.
21. Steve concluded by emphasising that the architect was unable to attend but may be open to responding to questions. He suggested that if anyone wants to have their voice heard that they must submit in writing to the Shire. Speaker 4 asked about whether or not a transcript of the meeting would be sent to the Shire. Julia (note taker) indicated that a copy of notes taken would be submitted after review from Steve. Steve noted that a lot of people spoke against the proposal tonight, but regardless of this meeting he emphasised that individuals

should submit their views to the Shire by 21st March. DRRRA will send a copy of these meeting notes to the Shire.

22. One participant indicated that there is a full stop at the end of the e mail address so it is important to remove the full stop so that all communications can go through to the Shire.
23. Meeting concluded at 9.05pm.