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Bishopstone

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True Heart Inn

Village on tenterhooks ahead of Arkell's plans for derelict pub

THE True Heart Inn has beaten for the last time and has a residential future under brewery plans to convert, sell and reinvest in Bishopstone's existing pub.

Arkell's Brewery already owns The Royal Oak in the village and wants to ensure its long-term future by pumping more finance into the venture.

It has bought the Oak's derelict neighbour and is due to present plans to the village on April 9, which are expected to map out a conversion and sale which will finance its existing business.

A spokeswoman said: "The intention is to convert The True Heart Inn to residential use, sell it and then invest that money into The Royal Oak.

"The Royal Oak is already an important part of the local community and the brewery wants to invest in it to make it better.

"The whole intention is to create a sustainable pub for the village and the only way is by investing in the pub.

"The brewery has taken a pragmatic approach. We can support The Royal Oak and make it better."

True Heart has been the subject of a number of ideas and plans in the past six years but John Jones, who had owned the pub since the mid-1990s, has finally sold it.

Last year he and wife Rosa circulated plans for a refurbished pub and two detached properties at the rear, but they were criticised by residents.

The Oak backs onto the True Heart and Arkell's plans to ensure any conversion will improve the long-term access to the rear of the former.

A member of staff at the Oak said: "From what I believe, it won't be opening as a pub again. It's pretty much a derelict building. The only movement in there for the past few years has been squatters of some kind.

"I could see it being turned into some housing. There is no market in the village for two pubs.

"How many local drinkers do you get these days? You only get a small crowd.

"We see ourselves as a locals' pub, but mostly people are eating here and reserving tables.

"If someone rings up for a table you're not going to turn them away because there might be some drinkers turning up later to spend £20 that evening."

Ian Thomas, vice-chairman of Bishopstone and Hinton Parva Parish Council, said: "We are very much in the dark at the moment.

"We are lucky in that the landlord of The Royal Oak keeps us up to date when he can. We are expecting plans soon, but nothing has come forward from Arkell's just yet."

Source: Swindon Advertiser 29 Mar 2015