

Pubs: Community Hubs or Neighbourhood Nuisances?

By Lillian Allen

Managed by hospitality experts, Fibber Magees has successful locations in both Manchester and Dubai. Ross Matthews-Smith, the owner of Fibber Magees, believes that pubs are an integral element of British culture and a community centre.

Concerns over smoking outside and noise levels have caused debate among the locals since Fibber Magees opened its doors in October. Some contend that the pub improves the neighbourhood socially and economically, while others think it is disturbing the tranquility of the area. Ross, has addressed these issues and described the actions done to resolve them.

“Pubs provide a third space for people to meet, socialise, and make new friends,” he explained. “Sale has an elderly demographic, and many of our daytime customers are older, single people who enjoy coming in, reading the paper, and chatting with the bar staff.”

In addition to its social function, the pub makes a substantial economic contribution to the community. Ross emphasised that the bar will have paid more than £150,000 in taxes and £120,000 in employee salaries in just a single year. Additionally, Fibber Magees purchases products from nearby companies and has given more than £10,000 to charities and schools in the area.

Notwithstanding these advantages, several locals have complained about the tavern, especially the noise and smoking outdoors.

But Ross maintains that he has taken the initiative to address these issues. He clarified that independent professionals, including acoustic engineers, determined that the risks posed by smoking and noise were insignificant throughout the planning permission procedure.

Fibber Magees has implemented a number of efforts to reduce disruptions:

- It is requested that smokers stand to the left of the structure, away from the display of fresh produce next door.

- On popular nights, security personnel are on duty to reduce the amount of people outdoors.
- There are five signs inside the pub reminding patrons to be mindful of smoking and noise levels.
- All employees are trained on how to implement these rules.

Additionally, Ross stressed that he has tried to interact with residents directly. Prior to filing the pub's planning application, he wrote to 1,000 local residences and businesses to solicit their opinions. He has continued to be available to neighbours who want to voice concerns, and he later arranged a Zoom discussion with seven residents who had concerns.

“My contact details are publicly available in the pub at all times,” he said. “Residents and businesses can always reach out to me directly.”

The argument over pub restrictions is linked to the Fibber Magees controversy. Although it's legal to smoke on the street in Trafford, some people think there should be more restrictions, especially in residential areas. Others argue that in order to lessen late-night disruptions, pubs ought to be forced to close earlier.

Fibber Magees is obviously making an effort to be a responsible neighbour, even though tensions still exist. It remains to be seen if these steps will be sufficient to appease locals, but the discussion about striking a balance between corporate interests and community concerns is not going to stop anytime soon.

Should locals be more tolerant of local businesses, or would stricter rules help avoid future conflicts? The discussion goes on.