

2 Latimer Cottages
West St
Sompting
BN15 0AR

20th April 2026

AWDM/0423/26 Change of use from Public House with flat over to residential dwelling including relevant internal and external changes, parking and landscaping

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing to register a formal objection to the above application for the change of use of The Gardeners Arms from a public house to a residential dwelling. While this letter is necessarily detailed, I respectfully ask that it be considered in full, as it sets out clear and evidenced reasons why the pub remains both viable and essential to the community it serves.

Firstly, the applicant has not demonstrated that the pub is no longer viable. The Viability Assessment is incomplete, omits key financial information, and fails to reference the last three years of audited trading accounts, which are essential to any credible viability analysis. It also fails to acknowledge the impact of Covid-19 on the trading years immediately preceding the marketing of the tied lease. Policy 33 requires applicants to demonstrate that all reasonable measures to improve viability have been pursued; no such evidence has been provided.

Secondly, the fact that the pub was repeatedly reopened clearly demonstrates ongoing demand. The Planning Statement acknowledges that “the property was re-opened and was trading on a limited basis,” and claims there was “no interest in the leasehold,” despite confirming that three separate tenants operated the pub between 2022 and 2025. In reality, the pub traded continuously during this period, with no closures between changes in management and no limitations, multiple offers were made on the leasehold. If there were genuinely “no demand,” the pub would not have been reopened multiple times, nor would prospective operators have sought to take it on. This directly contradicts the applicant’s assertion that the pub is no longer needed or supported.

Thirdly, the marketing evidence presented is flawed, incomplete, and potentially invalid. The freehold was only marketed from June 2024, not continuously since 2022. Several offers were made on the pub but rejected, demonstrating that the premises were both marketable and saleable as a public house. The viability statement further notes that “as part of the purchase the applicant completed form VAT1614D to disapply the option to tax the pub for conversion into a dwelling,” clearly indicating that the purchasers had already decided—at the point of acquisition—to pursue residential conversion. The marketing therefore does not meet the “reasonable period” requirement of Policy 33.

Fourthly, Appendix Two of the Viability Assessment misrepresents the marketing period. From 19 October 2022 to June 2024, the property was marketed only as a free-of-tie lease with full maintenance obligations. Genuine offers emerged only once the freehold was marketed, all at the asking price, with the only accepted offer being above asking price. **Had the sellers accepted the offer made by the third prospective purchaser in May 2025—who intended to retain the premises as a pub—the village would still have its public**

house today. This further demonstrates that the pub was viable, marketable, and in demand.

Fifthly, the applicant misrepresents Policy 33. The Planning Statement asserts that “the policy is expressed as an ‘or’ criteria... not all criteria have to be met.” This is misleading. Even under an “or” test, the applicant must fully satisfy at least one criterion, and they satisfy none. The Viability Assessment does not meet the CAMRA guidelines it claims to follow, fails to reference audited accounts, and does not demonstrate that reasonable measures to improve viability were pursued. The submission therefore cannot rely on Policy 33 to justify the loss of the pub.

In addition, the pubs referenced within the Viability Assessment do not constitute “alternative provision” as defined by CAMRA’s Public House Viability Test. CAMRA is explicit that alternative premises must be located within the same settlement, be genuinely accessible on foot, and offer comparable facilities and social function. The Gardeners Arms is the last remaining pub in Sompting village, and no other public house lies within the village boundary. CAMRA’s indicative accessibility radius of 800 metres (approximately a ten-minute walk) excludes all pubs cited by the applicant when assessed via realistic walking routes. The absence of pavements leading out of the village further restricts safe pedestrian access. Pubs in Lancing or Worthing therefore cannot be considered suitable alternatives, as they are in separate settlements, require travel by car or public transport, and do not serve the same community. The applicant’s reliance on these premises is fundamentally flawed and contrary to Policy 33 and CAMRA guidance.

Sixthly, The Gardeners Arms is the last remaining public house in Sompting, and strong national protection applies. Under Paragraph 98 of the NPPF and the emerging Policy HC6, the loss of the final community facility within a settlement is only permissible in exceptional circumstances, supported by robust evidence. No such evidence has been provided. The loss of the pub diminishes the community’s ability to meet day-to-day social needs, remove a vital social hub, undermine the historic character of the village, and conflict with national policy requiring councils to “guard against unnecessary loss.”

Seventhly, the applicant’s own evidence contains multiple internal contradictions. The Viability Assessment claims the population is too small to sustain the pub yet also states that there are 1,800 residents within 800 metres and a parish population of 9,000. It claims parking is adequate yet also argues that limited parking makes dining unviable. This is countered by a well trading curry house 1 minute from the pub. These inconsistencies, combined with the complete absence of financial evidence capable of demonstrating non-viability, significantly undermine the credibility of the assessment. As a document commissioned and paid for by the applicant, it is inherently imbalanced in its partiality, and the lack of objective, verifiable data further diminishes its evidential weight.

Eighthly, the application fails to recognise the substantial community value of the pub, despite clear evidence. The applicant’s own documents confirm that the pub historically hosted quiz nights, darts, cribbage, raffles, live music, and community gatherings—explicit indicators of community value under Paragraph 98 of the NPPF. The applicant’s failure to acknowledge or assess this value is unreasonable and contrary to policy.

Finally, the revised application does not overcome the Council’s previous reason for refusal. The earlier application was refused because “It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that it is no longer viable.” The current submission still fails to demonstrate non-viability, fails to evidence a lack of demand, and fails to provide a genuine or reasonable marketing exercise.

The removal of the dormer addresses only Reason for Refusal 2; Reason for Refusal 1 remains entirely unresolved.

In conclusion, the applicant has not provided the robust, credible, and demonstrable evidence required to justify the loss of a valued community facility. The proposal remains contrary to Policy 33 of the Adur Local Plan, Policies 15 and 17 relating to heritage and character, Paragraph 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and the emerging Policy HC6 concerning the retention of key community facilities. The Gardeners Arms is the last remaining public house in Sompting, and its loss is already causing significant and irreversible harm to the social fabric, heritage, and identity of the village.

For the reasons above, I wish for the council to refuse planning permission.

Kind regards,

Louisa Sadler